politics

25¢ a copy | ***A Monthly Review*** | **November**

Credit: Press Association, Inc.

Puzzle Picture: Why Is Herr Kommandant Smiling? Answer on p. 298.

"Dual Power" in France 290

Comment 294

Reconversion—to What?, by Walter J. Oakes 299

Commonnonsense, by Niccolo Tucci..... 304

Behind the Philadelphia "Hate" Strike, by Nat Glazer and Frederick Hoffman 306

European Newsreel, by Louis Clair..... 308

POPULAR CULTURE
The Ethics of the Detective Story —from Raffles to Miss Blandish, by George Orwell 310

Uncle P. M., by Robert Paul Smith..... 315

THE AMERICAN SCENE
P.A.C.—A Worm's-Eye View..... 316

CONTRIBUTORS 316

THE INTELLIGENCE OFFICE 317

"Dual Power" in France

Some Facts the American Press Has Not Reported

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Dual Power" in France

What is happening in France is the one great positive movement towards humanly progressive ends to come out of this war to date. While the American labor movement dares go no farther than a New Dealism which died in 1937 and British working class lacks the energy to create a significant left opposition within the decadent Labor Party; while Anglo-American foreign policy offers the German people no alternative except desperate resistance and no postwar prospect except creation of another Nazi movement; while the Kremlin betrays the Warsaw insurgents and extends its imperialistic sway over Central Europe without even a pretense of bringing social gains to its new subject peoples, supporting kings, native fascists, reactionaries and bourgeois-democrats indifferently as long as they play Russia's game; while the Italian revolution lies temporarily shattered by Allied policy and by sheer starvation; while our soldiers and sailors in the Far Eastern theatre endure the brutal horrors of extermination warfare in a struggle for rubber, tin, oil, strategic bases, cheap native labor and the other classic imperialistic motives for bloodshed—while everywhere one looks, in a word, the picture is of meaningless, futile human suffering and brutality; in France we see also suffering, also brutality but at least the struggle is for some sensible end, at least there is a strong popular movement in revolt against what Marx called "the muck of ages" and Engels, less elegantly, "the old crap."

DeGaulle Is "Recognized"—for What He Is

The governments of Britain, Russia and the United States have just formally recognized the DeGaulle regime as the Provisional Government of the French Republic. The term is ironically just: it would seem that Roosevelt (whose opposition has hitherto held up recognition) has at last "recognized" the general in his real aspect, as a prop of conservatism. (A French wit remarked the other day, "DeGaulle has changed in a fortnight from Jeanne d'Arc to Henri Quatre.") The Allied recognition has nothing to do with France's international position and everything to do with her domestic problems. "All the evidence here indicates that this Allied decision was reached suddenly on Friday," writes Harold Callender in the *N. Y.. Times* for Oct. 24. "Just a day or two ago, both Roosevelt and Churchill had made statements implying that recognition was a long ways off still. But meanwhile difficulties inside France had drawn attention to the risks that might lie ahead if the DeGaulle government did not receive all the backing the Allies could give it."

Diplomatic recognition was preceded by Eisenhower's division of France into a military and a civil zone. In the military zone, a comparatively small area in the North adjacent to the present battle lines, the Allied High Command is still the supreme authority. But all the rest of France is now turned over to the DeGaulle regime—another move to strengthen its hand. "French troops," writes Callender, "may now show themselves in various parts of the country where the Government's authority still is attenuated and thus contribute to that order and national unity for which General DeGaulle has appealed."

If the Allies are now exploiting DeGaulle as a counterweight to the popular revolutionary forces, DeGaulle in turn tries to blackmail those forces into submission by pointing to the Allies' desire for "order and national unity" in France. "Certain internal disorders," he exclaimed recently, "threaten France's international security!" The hint is not too subtle. But direct military intervention by British and American troops still seems a long way off. It would also offer considerable political difficulties to the Allied home governments—not to mention the probable reluctance of the troops themselves to shoot down French strikers and "rioters"—and will undoubtedly not be attempted so long as there seems any hope of DeGaulle, with strong Anglo-American backing, diverting the present poltical currents into conservative channels.

"Disorder Is Preferable to Injustice"

The "difficulties" and "risks" mentioned by Callender are, of course, the result of the vigorous and bold moves by popular anti-capitalist forces which have taken place in France of late. In his survey of the French underground press in our September issue, Louis Clair showed how widespread revolutionary feeling is and also how concretely radical are the programs now being put forward by groups like Liberer et Federer. Developments in the last two months have revealed that these revolutionary forces are so strong as to create, especially in Southern and Central France, the classic pre-revolutionary situation of "dual power". Thus early in October, the DeGaulle leadership in Paris held an important conference with eight of the government's regional commissioners. The harassed commissioners brought grave tidings of "disorder" and "excesses." They reported that the Council of National Resistance (the organization of the hundreds of thousands of underground fighters who carried on the struggle inside France under the Germans) had its own revolutionary tribunals functioning throughout their territories, administering justice without paying much attention to the regular civil and military courts set up by the central government. The government's municipal authorities are matched by the underground's local committees; its departmental councils are matched by the underground's departmental "Committees of Liberation."

These departmental committees have no intention of abdicating peacefully in favor of the central government. Eleven of them, from as many departments in Southeastern France, recently passed a resolution stating they would mutually assist each other if any one were attacked, and threatening to act "like the States General in 1789." (In

politics

VOLUME 1, NO. 10 NOVEMBER, 1944

Editor: Dwight Macdonald
Business Manager: Nancy Macdonald
Circulation Manager: Dorothy Brumm

POLITICS is published monthly at 45 Astor Place, New York 3, N. Y., by Politics Publishing Co. Subscription: $2.50 a year; Canada, $2.80; elsewhere, $3. Special rate for service men and C.O.'s anywhere: $1.75 a year. Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by stamped self-addressed envelopes. Copyright November, 1944, by Politics Publishing Co. Entered as second-class matter March 16, 1944, at the post-office at New York, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

85

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

no other nation today do revolutionary traditions seem so alive as in France: 1789, 1830, 1848, 1871—such dates are vibrant with political meaning to the man in the street.) The preamble of another resolution boldly declares "We remind the government in Paris that it owes its existence to the victorious action of our movement and that it must therefore base its policy on our will." Against this popular tide, DeGaulle would erect the breakwater of State power. "It is the State," he declared at Rouen on October 9, "the justice of the State, the authority of the State, the force of the State, and only its force, its justice, and its authority which has to be imposed." To which the Resistance paper, *Combat* answers: "Disorder is preferable to injustice. It is not order that should reinforce justice, but rather justice that should insure order."

Writing in *Pour le Victoire* of October 21, "Sagittarius" gives a vivid picture of "Dual Power":

"We have more and more the impression that in the provinces, and especially in the large cities of central France, the situation is chaotic. The decisions of the central government are disregarded, and relations are increasingly strained between the regional commissioners and local Resistance and F.F.I. groups. It is even reported that, in the last few days. Marseille has seen real street battles which have forced the American military authorities to put into effect strict curfew regulations and to offer to the municipal authorities the help of the Military Police in restoring a minimum degree of public order."

What Is Happening in the Provinces?

Nothing has appeared in the *N. Y. Times* about these alleged riots in Marseille, or indeed about the whole situation in the provinces outside Paris. Censorship seems to have blacked out all first-hand report from provincial France. From a few recent issues of French papers that have come to my hand, however, something may be deduced.

It is significant, to begin with, that it is the provinces which are in rebellion. In previous French revolutions, it has been Paris which led the way, with the provinces either apathetic or actively hostile. This time the situation seems to some extent to be reversed. Or perhaps more accurately: popular sentiment has been able to express itself more freely in the provinces because the bad state of communications makes it difficult for the central government in Paris to control them. But this does not explain why the provinces themselves should display a revolutionary temper. This fact suggests the deepgoing nature of the political crisis in France in the past decade which culminated in the terrible collapse of June, 1940. It also suggests that the intimate collaboration of the French big bourgeoisie with the Nazis, both before the war and during the occupation period, now makes it impossible for them to perform their usual function of leading (and financing) the peasants and small bourgeoisie against the revolution. Big businessmen and high military chiefs are now the ones on trial for their lives as "traitors to the nation." One might, finally, surmise that the collapse of 1940 and the German occupation shattered the crust of conservatism and traditionalism even of the peasants and small bourgeoisie.

Ever since the DeGaulle regime moved from Algiers back to France, it has been under tremendous pressure from the left. It has had to scrap the dictatorial regulations it had prepared to muzzle the French press (see POLITICS for July). It has been forced to give the Resistance forces within France a far higher percentage of the seats in the new Consultative Assembly than it had planned: no less than 174 seats out of a total membership of 246. It has also found it advisable to broaden the powers of the Assembly. "One can hardly overestimate the importance of the new regulations about the Assembly," comments "Sagittarius". "They reflect a democratic spirit which was notably lacking in the text originally prepared in Algiers."

Such economic steps as the taking over by the government of the great Renault automobile works and of the whole coal mining industry are also the result of this pressure. As was DeGaulle's famous "planned economy" speech of October 1 (delivered, significantly, in Lille, chief city of the industrial North) in which he said (doubtless with an anxious sideglance at Roosevelt and Churchill): "We do not want to return to that political, social and moral situation that took us to the edge of the abyss. . . . We want the State to direct the economic life of the entire nation for the benefit of all and to insure that the life of every Frenchman and Frenchwoman shall become a better one."

As the American press did *not* report, one of the main reasons DeGaulle made his Lille speech was that on September 18 the Lyon radio broadcast a manifesto calling for "decentralizing administration and establishing a working democracy", which was widely discussed, and which was followed three days later by the Limoges radio with a Manifesto of the National Liberation Movement. Among the points of this latter were:

"To replace capitalism with a regime in which production and distribution will be subordinated to consumption.

"To organize economy on a rational basis in accordance with a national production plan.

"To form a new national people's army of which the F.F.I. and F.T.P must form the core and backbone.

"To carry out educational reforms which will create an aristocracy of merit, not birth.

"To place technical progress at the service of all men, to put natural resources at the disposal of the community.

"To make economic democracy and social democracy realities."

Dual Power—A Case History

A typical clash between the central government and the provincial Liberation Committees is described in recent issues of the newspaper, *Allobroges*, of Grenoble. On September 22, the Liberation Committees of eleven departments—including Isere, Jura, Rhone, Savoie and Haute Savoie—met in Valence and adopted a series of economic measures mostly concerned with wages. Increases were ordered for practically every category of worker, enforcement being significantly put in the hands of "the purge commission of the Departmental National Liberation Committee." More basic reforms were also proposed, in very leftish language:

"The delegates of the Economic Commissions, realizing that they owe their existence to the French people, and that the conclusions reached by them reflect the general approval of the laboring classes, resolve:

"(1) To examine without further delay all necessary reforms to lower the cost of living and to improve the situation of the workers.

"(2) After carrying out the wage increases in September, to seek a national plan of wage determination with the following aims:

"(a) To establish a national wage base for unskilled wage workers, this wage to be calculated by taking into consideration the actual cost of living in such a way as

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to assure to the worker and his family a standard of living compatible with the dignity of the free citizen.

"(b) To establish a national system of wage coefficients for skilled workers, specialists and technicians, fixing salary categories accordingly.

"(3) That the retirement of the aged may be less degrading and that their lifetime of labor may be more justly compensated.

"(4) To establish a unified system of National Social Insurance to cover family allotments on account of accidents occurring in the course of work (i.e., workmen's compensation).

"(5) To create labor-management committees to carry on the work in close touch with the employer, *if the latter has neither collaborated with the enemy nor enjoyed scandalous profits.* (Italics mine—D.M.)

"(6) Industries classified as banks, insurance companies, etc., must become the absolute property of the entire nation.

"Only thus will France realize a true democracy, one based on a fair compensation for labor—a democracy where the interests of all are more important than the interests of the individual."

These humane and reasonable proposals naturally were a great shock to the DeGaulle government. Therefore *Allobroges* of Sept. 29 carried a special communique: "The Commissioner of the Republic warns the public that this text has no legal force whatsoever. The government promulgates orders, the Commissioners of the Republic and the prefects issue decrees. Nobody is entitled to mislead opinion by taking initiatives which create confusion and upset readers. The public must therefore consider as null and void the decree on wages published in the *Allobroges.*" Readers of the press must not be upset by proposals which offer them hope of a better life. In a word—most irregular, most irregular!

With Gallic politesse and perhaps also with a certain tinge of Gallic irony, the Liberation Committees of the Rhone and Alps regions, just five days after promulgating the decrees noted above, sent a telegram of "affectionate greetings" to DeGaulle, adding: "We invite you, as head of the government, to attend the meeting of all the departmental committees of the South, which will shortly be held in Avignon."

Even more dramatic is the little episode related in the Swiss paper, *Die Tat,* for Oct. 30: "On DeGaulle's recent visit to Toulouse he was given a warm welcome by every one except the prefect, whom he had appointed. This man was in jail. DeGaulle ordered that he be set free at once so that he might share in the festivities; but after the General's departure, the poor prefect was imprisoned again."

Thus the seesaw struggle of Dual Power goes on.

Sidelight on Parliamentary Democracy

When DeGaulle was in Algiers, those who feared his dictatorial aspirations predicted that he would delay as long as possible the general elections. Actually, it is the central government which is now pressing for elections to be held soon, while it is the leftwing Resistance forces which are trying to delay them. This is not because DeGaulle has become a good democrat, but rather because the force of the leftwing movement is such that he is now forced to turn to the elections in order (a) to strengthen the authority of the government, and (b) to dilute the present concentration of leftists in positions of power. For since it may be assumed that the more militant and politically conscious elements of the population are those which dared to take part in underground activities against the Nazis, so long as the Resistance committees retain their present power, so long will such elements continue to play a part in politics disproportionate to their actual numbers. A general election, in which the whole population would take part, would almost unquestionably put in power more "moderate" elements. This is an interesting sidelight on the workings of democracy. Which "really" represents Rousseau's "Popular Will": the numerical majority, or the minority whose policies best represent the interests of the majority? The answer is, of course, that elections are only one way by which the Popular Will expresses itself—and a method furthermore, which has the weakness that it may be more easily manipulated by conservative forces than such alternative methods as revolutionary committees. The trouble with elections is that they do not measure the intensity with which people hold views. Who is to say that ten men and women who will die for their beliefs are not as "deserving" of realizing those beliefs as a hundred who will do no more than mark a cross on a ballot? The ultimate arbiter must be the unforced spontaneous wishes of the majority of the people. But these wishes are not the fruit of an Immaculate Conception but of certain most earthy and material influences; people want what their environment tells them to want, and revolutionary committees are as legitimate ways to change that environment as parliamentary elections.

So are rebels with guns in their hands. The clash between the central government and the Resistance groups reaches its greatest intensity in the delicate matter of who is to have the guns. A month ago the government decreed that the F.F.I. (French Forces of the Interior) should become part of the regular army. So far, however, this decree seems to be largely a dead letter. The F. F. I.'s "committee of military action" has simply refused to carry out its provisions, and the F.F. I. rank and file have refused either to turn in their arms or to accept the authority of the regular army. This puts DeGaulle in an awkward position. As Callender wrote in the *Times* recently: since the DeGaulle regime itself is of dubious legality and derives its sanction wholly from the Resistance movement, "it cannot even think of using its authority forcibly against less disciplined emanations of the Resistance movement." "Anyhow," he adds with unconcious cynicism, "the government has no police force with which to assert its authority." In Belgium, the American military authorities, reports the *Times,* "insured the disarmament of doubtful elements of the population before handing all authority over to civilian Belgian authorities." But in France, they apparently did not dare take open measures. The most they ventured was the kind of deal with the Germans that is pictured on this issue's cover. Not that this isn't going pretty far, at that, in some ways.

What of the Communists?

There seems no question that the French Communist Party is by far the most powerful single group in the Resistance movement. The circulation in Paris of its organ, *Humanite,* is a great deal larger than that of any other leftwing paper. Russia is also extremely popular: observers agree that at Parisian meetings, Russia gets much more applause than either Britain or the U. S. A. It is indicative of the strength of the leftward current in France today that the French CP up to now has played a distinctly left game. (Any member of the American CP who advo-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cated policies like those backed by the French CP would find himself out of the party—pardon, association—in short order.) The French CP has put itself at the head of the left opposition to DeGaulle for two reasons: (a) it fears the loss of its popular support if it hangs back; (b) the Kremlin now regards DeGaulle as the puppet of Anglo-American imperialism and wants to replace him with its own puppet.

A possible shift in the second factor may be indicated by the fact that Russia cooperated with Britain and the USA in recognizing the DeGaulle government. In the past—as in its unilateral recognition of the Badoglio regime—the Kremlin has not hesitated to act independently in such matters. Its collaboration here, especially considering the implications of diplomatic recognition as a means of strengthening DeGaulle against the left, may therefore be significant. If it is significant, then either the French CP will lose some of its present revolutionary ardor or it will free itself somewhat from Moscow's control and adopt the relatively independent attitude of the Chinese Communists. One should not make the mistake, by the way, of attributing to Russia a godlike omnipotence even in dealing with its own foreign Communist movements. China shows, and France may show, that the degree of effective control from Moscow is in inverse proportion to the size of the Communists' mass base.

In any case, it is a grave weakness of the present Resistance movement that even its most advanced sections (and perhaps, indeed, especially these) accept the Communists as loyal comrades and look on Russia with sympathy. Nor is the attitude towards the other imperialist powers, England and the USA, much more realistic. As a friend remarked the other day, apropos the popular enthusiasm in France for the Allies, especially Russia: "The French left groups today are strong on the positive, programmatic side, but they are confused on the critical side. *They do not yet know who their enemies are.*" Already the three great imperialisms are intervening through DeGaulle against the popular Resistance movement. Let us hope that in losing their illusions, the French people do not also lose their revolutionary ardor.

Postscript: the Conflict Sharpens

As this goes to press news comes of a great intensification of the struggle between DeGaulle and the Resistance movement. Early in October, a congress was held at Avignon by the departmental committees of the National Liberation Movement (i.e., the Resistance groups). Three hundred delegates were present, representing 40 of France's 88 departments. The Congress adopted a resolution stating that, pending the holding of elections, the liberation committees alone represented "the will of the people". It recognized the DeGaulle Government as representing the French People, but pointed out that it is only because the Government has the confidence of the committees that it can "legitimately consider itself as having a mandate from French democracy." According to a dispatch from Lyon on October 10:

"A series of resolutions adopted by the Congress boil down to two main issues: (1) All elements of the Resistance movement oppose the Government scheme, as embodied in the Algiers ordinance of April 21, for reconstitution of the old government, organization of pre-Vichy France, and the restoration of the old centralized prefectoral system, which is reportedly favored by DeGaulle. [One of the healthiest aspects of the Resistance movement's politics is this constant insistence on decentralization and local initiative—healthy both as a blow to DeGaulle's dictatorial aspirations and also as a sign that the left has learned something from the Bolsheviks' exaggeration of centralism as a revolutionary tactic.—D.M.] (2) They flatly oppose a scheme embodied in the same ordinance for the gradual elimination of the liberation committees as the old institutions are reestablished. Instead they see the Resistance movement as following the traditional role of French revolutionary movements and forming a base for new States General such as drew up France's first Bill of Rights in 1788 and laid the foundation for the Third Republic a century later."

It was perhaps as a reply to this bold statement that DeGaulle made his "national unity" speech of October 14, in which he set forward a very different conception of What Is To Be Done:

"We must . . . rebuild and rejuvenate our country. . . . To achieve this task, we must have order. Officials in every rank must assume their legal responsibility and relieve those who assumed authority at a time when it was necessary to act quickly to expel the enemy. These improvisations were perfectly justifiable under the circumstances, but today they can only be considered an abuse of authority and a source of confusion. [How they hate "improvisations!" —D. M.]

"The task of governing rests in the hands of the Government, which will tender its account to the sovereign nation as soon as the latter is able to express its wishes through electing its representatives by universal suffrage. The task of administration pertains to those administrative authorities who are appointed by the Government. The right to command an armed force of any kind is restricted to the leaders who are appointed by the ministers concerned. Finally, the right to administer justice pertains exclusively to the judiciary and to those judges who have been appointed by the States."

The conflict between revolutionary and non-revolutionary authority has rarely been posed more clearly than in the two above statements. It is, by the way, a sign of the high level of French politics today that such major issues are being so thoroughly debated, instead of the wretched argument over king or no-king in Italy, or over Dewey or Roosevelt in this country. This morning's paper (October 30) indicates that the conflict is reaching a decisive point over the key question: who is to bear arms? On October 28, the Government decreed that the Patriotic Guard, a Communist-controlled armed force, should be disarmed and dissolved. The following day, the National Council of Resistance met and voted to support the Patriotic Guard against the Government. It made a counter-proposal that the Guard be kept intact and given "legal status." It also objected to the fact that the Government had not consulted the Council before it issued its decree. "No measure aimed at the Patriotic Guard should be taken without the knowledge of the National Council of Resistance," it stated boldly. Perhaps the most significant aspect of the whole affair is that the Government had hoped that its suppressior of the Patriotic Guard would be an affair simply between itself and the Communists. Instead, the Council at once backed up the Communists, and thus made the issue one between the entire Resistance movement and the DeGaulle Government.

The battle seems to be fairly joined. In the Spanish border situation, where some interned Spanish Republican militiamen who had been fighting in the Resistance movement took over some mountain towns just over the border, DeGaulle seems to have succeeded in preventing the Resist-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ance forces from carrying on this anti-Franco campaign (and embroiling him with England and the USA, which for very good reasons are strongly backing Franco). But it may not be so easy to put out the fire inside France.

(*I am indebted to Louis Clair for much of the material in this article.—D. M.*)

Comment

A Delicate Subject Elsewhere in this issue is an article on the Philadelphia traction strike last summer. The authors document quite conclusively their charge that the company played on racial animosities (or allowed its property and its stooges to be used in this way) in order to weaken the union; and it is true, as they write, that promotion of "hate strikes" may become a novel and sinister kind of postwar anti-union technique. But I think they, in common with most liberal and radical commentators on the strike, underestimate the role of the workers themselves, the "rank-and-file" so sacred in Marxist tradition, in this scandalous affair.

It is time we of the left began to recognize a most unpleasant Fact of Life: that racial prejudices have real grass roots among the American workingclass, including the most enlightened and conscious part of it, the membership of the unions. In the AFL, racial discrimination is in many unions official policy, expressed in constitutional bars against colored members and in the actions of high union leaders. The liberal-radical explanation here is that the bureaucracy is to blame, not the ranks. But this won't do for the CIO, where no formal color bars exist and where it is, on the contrary, the top leadership which tries to break down the racial prejudices of the ranks. The auto workers' union is the most dramatic instance: despite what is probably the most enlightened racial program of any union, despite President Thomas's special personal concern with racial democracy, hate strikes have flared up in a number of UAW-organized shops. Nor can one overlook the fact that the worst race riot in many years took place in 1943 in Detroit, the stronghold of the UAW.

The Philadelphia strike was preceded last summer by at least two large-scale race strikes, and both of them in plants organized by CIO unions with progressive racial policies. In June, 2500 workers in the great Dan and Riverside Cotton Mills in Danville, Va., went on strike when the company—hard pressed by labor shortage—gave production jobs to a few colored women. (In Southern textile plants, whether unionized or not, Negroes get only low-pay custodial jobs.) Despite the efforts of the Textile Workers Union, CIO, the strikers held firm until the company reversed its action. But that was in the South? Then consider the strike which made idle 15,000 workers last June at the Lockland, O., plant of Wright Aeronautical. The issue was the upgrading of seven Negro employees, and on this issue the strikers held out against the combined efforts of their union (the UAW), the company and the Government for five days, delaying production of critical war material. Only when the UAW turned over to the Army the names of 25 strike leaders "for any action it desires to take" and backed up the company in a threat to fire any worker who did not come back to work by a given deadline, only then was the strike broken. And even then 240 employees failed to return.

Let's Face the Facts In Philadelphia, six thousand workers stuck together, with practically no defections, for six full days in a strike which paralyzed a key production center, which was opposed by "their own" union, and which finally yielded only to the most drastic military intervention. For this remarkable exhibition of the classic workingclass virtues of solidarity and militancy (here perverted to the service of the most viciously reactionary ends), there are three possible explanations:

(1) *Institutional:* The workers, as the authors of our article suggest, were shunted into the strike pattern, despite their lack of enthusiasm for the racial issue, by the pressure of the employer. This implies, at best, that they had no very strong positive convictions *against* racial discrimination.

(2) *Economic:* They were apprehensive about postwar job prospects and wanted to prevent Negroes competing for the better jobs. This motive would still remain even if we assume that most strikers realized that the issue raised by the strike leaders (that the transfer of Negroes into motormen's jobs would threaten the seniority of those now employed as motormen) was a false one, seniority on the P. R. T. being departmental and not company-wide. Those not in the better jobs would still want to eliminate new competitors for those jobs.

(3) *Psychological:* The strikers had active anti-Negro prejudices, and responded favorably to McMenamin's: "It's white against blacks! The colored people have bedbugs!"

All three explanations probably enter in. But whatever their relative importance, each of them shows that the American workingclass can be tragically split on the racial issue, and that American white workers will rally to racial demagogy.

This is not to deny that *ultimately* it is true that such behavior is the product not of any "natural" human instincts but of the pressures and culture of the exploitative class society we live in, nor that responsibility for those pressures and that culture must be laid at the door of those who run it for their own class interests. Thus the Federal Grand Jury, composed of upper-middle-class Philadelphia citizens, which investigated the strike has just handed up its findings: 30 strikers are indicted, not a word is said about the company's role, and the whole business is blamed, by inference, on the "subversive" CIO, which is denounced as "a strong central power. . . . reaching its tentacles into every community." Thus, also, the Government's vigorous action against the strike was inspired not by any concern for race relations but by the fact that war production was being seriously held up: this is indicated by the failure of Roosevelt to utter a word of criticism of the racial aspect of the strike, and by the absence, amidst verbose "patriotic" appeals, of any reference to racial democracy in the Army's proclamation.

Nevertheless, it is surely one of the most tragic ironies of this ironical war that, while we have seen some big and stubborn strikes under the leadership of the Communists (B.I.—Before Invasion) and of John L. Lewis, most rank-and-file strikes that have shown any staying power have been hate strikes. Racial prejudice has been the only motive strong enough to move the worker to defy the State, the boss and their own leadership. If we are to do anything effective about race relations, we must understand the seriousness of the situation.

Non-Partisan Doublecross It is now clear that Roosevelt, in the matter of the vice-presidential nomination, performed the remarkable feat of doublecross-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing *both* the conservative Byrnes and the Liberal Wallace. (In treachery, our Commander-in-Chief is, as Sidney Hillman would say, "non-partisan.") Each man went to Chicago with every reasonable belief that "the Boss" had chosen him for running-mate. Byrnes had talked personally with Roosevelt and had been urged to go ahead; in fact, some reports suggest Roosevelt took the initiative and invited Byrnes to try for the nomination. Wallace had also talked with him, and had been given a letter which seemed to endorse him—in lukewarm tones, it is true—for the nomination. Arthur Krock, in the *N. Y. Times* for Sept. 13, has now revealed that Roosevelt *on the same day he wrote Wallace's letter* also wrote the now-famous "second letter" to Chairman Hannegan, endorsing in much stronger terms either Truman or Douglas. "The Boss" forgot to mention this trivial fact to his good friend, Wallace, and when the latter got suspicious later on he was assured "by people very close to the President" that no such letter existed. What happened to Wallace at Chicago is now history—or at least a footnote to history. Byrnes, too, arrived in Chicago all cheery and optimistic. But meanwhile Hillman had put pressure on Roosevelt against Byrnes, and so The Boss told Hannegan that Byrnes was now a "political liability." So Byrnes had to withdraw, with the minimum of gracefulness, from the race. The epilogue to the tale is characteristic: after knifing them in this underhanded way, Roosevelt is now trying to get both Wallace and Byrnes to accept high posts in his Fourth Term administration.

Russomania in England A letter that came in the other day from George Orwell in London gives some interesting evidence of the "Russification" of English political thought in the last two years. "I was interested to see," he writes, "that the May number of POLITICS reviews Laski's *Faith, Reason and Civilization*, and I thought it might amuse you to see the review I wrote of it when first published. This review was written for *The Manchester Evening News*, the evening paper of *The Manchester Guardian* (generally looked on as the only truthful paper in England), for which I write once a fortnight. The editor refused to print it, evidently because of its anti-Stalin implications. If you look through it, you will see that I have gone about as far as was consistent with ordinary honesty *not* to say what pernicious tripe the book is; and yet my remarks were too strong even for *The Manchester Evening News*. This will give you an idea of the kind of thing you can't print in England nowadays. Yet this isn't due to the Stalinists, who aren't much regarded nowadays. Editors will print nothing anti-Russian because of the supposed Russomania of the general public and also because of the complaints which the Soviet government is constantly raising about the British press."

Orwell's rejected review terms Russia " a state definitely describable as Socialist" and praises Laski because "he is aware that the USSR is the real dynamo of the Socialist movement in this country and everywhere else." ("Therefore, the USSR must be safeguarded at all costs," the reviewer adds.) His quarrel with Laski is that Laski shuts his eyes to "purges, liquidations, the dictatorship of a minority, suppression of criticism and so forth." Orwell also takes to pieces Laski's phoney analogy of Stalin's Russia with the early Christian church. That such a review, agreeing with Laski on the main point—the socialist nature of the USSR today—and merely venturing to make the criticisms any honest and intelligent reviewer would have to make of Laski's book—that such a review should be too hot for a paper like *The Manchester Evening News* shows how seriously the feats of the Red Army have misled English public opinion about Russia. (It will be recalled that *The Manchester Guardian*—and the English liberal press in general—was much more honest and critical about the Moscow Trials than our own liberal journals; the *Guardian* in particular threw its columns open to Trotsky himself.)

One reason for the present Russomania in British is, of course, the universal feeling that the Red Army "saved" England—as it probably did—coupled with admiration for Russian military strength. And from such admiration it is a short step to the conclusion that a nation which performs so effectively on the battlefield must be pretty wonderful behind the lines. Another reason is perhaps less obvious: that the English workers and middleclass are fed up with private capitalism and put their post-war hopes in some kind of socialism. In this mood, it is easy to feel sympathetic—from a safe distance—to Russia. Finally, one must add the agreement of both workingclass and big business on a high degree of state intervention into the economic process after the war. The Government's recent White Paper on Employment Policy opened with the statement "The Government accept as one of their primary aims and responsibilities the maintenance of a high and stable level of employment after the war." Over here it is not the state which proclaims this responsibility but "private enterprise", notably the business-financed Committee for Economic Development. Thus if there are less illusions about Russia over here, and more freedom to criticise Stalinism in the general press, this fortunate state of affairs is largely due to the more reactionary temper of public opinion. Such are the paradoxes that arise when the hopes of progressives are pinned, by default, on a great anti-progressive force.

In England the paradoxes are even more fantastic. Consider the greatest strike movement so far in the war in England: the spontaneous walkout last March of some hundred thousand coal miners in protest against the Government's Porter Award. This magnificent demonstration of workingclass energy and courage—which unfortunately got nowhere because the men were opposed by a united front of Government, mine-owners, and their own "leaders" —centered in South Wales. The head of the union there is Arthur Horner, a leading British Communist. Horner out-Bevinned Bevin in his attempts to break the strike. His executive committee—the union's, that is, not the British C.P.'s—denounced the strike with the usual Stalinist formulation: it "threatened national unity". (As indeed it did.) Horner complained to the press, with unconscious cynicism: "The men are in a hell of a mood. There used to be a time when a hymn would start them back, but not now." The role in the strike of what Laski calls "the Russian idea" was indicated in a dispatch of March 11 to the *N. Y. Times:* "The coal miners talk admiringly of Communism and the employers say that only the fact that Russia was an ally of Britain prevented the walkout from spreading more widely than it did. 'We tremble to think what would have happened here if Russia had not entered the war on our side,' the manager of one big coal company said."

The incredibly complex situation may be summarized: (1) the strikers are for socialism because they are radical, if not revolutionary; (2) they look to Russia for leadership because they think of Russia as a socialist country; (3) Russia responds, via Comrade Horner, by trying to break the strike because it interferes with the war effort; (4) some of the miners thereupon give up the strike, but most apparently do not. Objectively, those who continue to strike are behaving in a way more likely to bring about

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

progressive social change than those who give in to the mine-owners and their Communist allies. But subjectively, it might well be that it is precisely those who feel most deeply the necessity for radical political action who give up the strike on advice of their Communist leaders; while those who continue the strike may be mostly these whose horizon is limited to purely economic demands. Thus in this country it is the Republican John L. Lewis who has led the great wartime strikes, it is the conservative AFL which has stood out most strongly against the Governmental emasculation of the labor movement, while it is the more "socially conscious" CIO, dominated by New Dealers and Communists, which has struck the deadliest blows against the workingclass movement. The whole paradoxical business reaches a head in the practice of most newspapers of still referring to the Communists in trade unions, or in the American Labor Party, as the "left wing", when their actual policies are usually far to the right of the most hardshell AFL bureaucrat.

Conclusion: today it's a wise worker who knows his own fatherland.

Etcetera ● Way back in the days when the Atlantic Charter was taken seriously, they named a type of American bombing plane the "Liberator." The other day Vultee Aircraft announced a more up-to-date name for its new bomber, namely, the "Dominator." The name, incidentally, was suggested by Vultee's board chairman, Tom M. Girdler, hero of the Little Steel Strike. Time marches *on!*

● George Orwell's article on detective-story ethics in this issue is being published simultaneously in the English literary monthly, *Horizon*. Not the full text, however. The editors of *Horizon* insisted on cutting out one passage entirely: ". . . and accounts, for instance, for the positive delight with which many English intellectuals greeted the Nazi-Soviet pact." And they altered another: in the reference to "the countless English intellectuals who kiss the arse of Stalin" the last five words are replaced by "worship dictators." (Incidentally completely changing Orwell's meaning.) This kind of panicky self-censorship is evidence of the degree to which the English intelligentsia has succumbed to Russomania (cf. also Orwell's experience with the *Manchester Guardian* noted earlier in this department).

● A. Philip Randolph, of the Sleeping Car Porters and the March on Washington Movement, seems to be out for the national Quick-Change-Artist title. Last spring he was invited by the Socialist Party to be its vice-presidential candidate; his letter declining the offer (on grounds of too much work to be done in his union's affairs) seemed to endorse with enthusiasm the S. P.'s platform. Then a month or so later, I chanced to receive in the mail a handsomely printed invitation to a $5-a-plate dinner given by the Liberal Party, and there in the list of the Party's vice-presidents I was startled to see the name of A. Philip Randolph. My surprise was due to the fact that the Liberal Party has just one function at present: to get votes for Roosevelt this fall. My confusion was completed the other day when I read in the *Call* (which has not, to my knowledge, criticised Mr. Randolph for his sudden change of heart—or even, indeed, mentioned the fact) an admiring account of Mr. Randolph's speech at the annual convention of the union he heads, in which he declared: "The Administration has given in completely to the white supremacy bloc of the South. . . . Both the Democratic and Republican parties are living in a fool's paradise if they believe they have the Negro vote in the bag." Certainly any one is living in a fool's paradise if he thinks he has Mr. Randolph's vote in the bag.

● *No Comment Dept.* During its nine years of existence, the WPA spent about $10,500,000,000. This is enough to pay for 40 days of the present war.

● In this department last spring I recommended Frank Hanighen's news-letter, "Human Events". I must now, regretfully, report that since then "Human Events" has degenerated badly from a journalistic standpoint; except for Hanighen's own stuff, the recent issues have had little new or deeply considered in them. Furthermore, it has emerged more and more clearly as a Republican isolationist propaganda sheet; most of its issues could have been written in Senator Taft's office. Its special supplement on the Republican Convention, for example.

● POLITICS readers, I think, will find useful and interesting a new monthly information bulletin called "Russian Affairs" which is published by the Institute for Russian Studies of the Rand School of Social Science. Cost: 10c an issue, $1 a year. Address: 7 East 15th St., New York 3, N. Y. The first issue (October) contains articles on "The Warsaw Uprising", "The Russian Trade Unions", "Germany and Russia", "The Fate of the Jew in Russia" and other subjects. They are written in objective language, and are closely packed with information drawn from Russian-language sources. Much valuable background material is given in each article. (I hope I won't have to take all this back later on.)

● Some light on Roosevelt's claim to political progressivism, and also on his Administration's "hard peace" policy for the German people, is shown by a curious fact which *The Progressive* of July 31 last uncovered. In his speech accepting the Democratic nomination, Roosevelt quoted as follows from "the greatest wartime president in our history":

"With firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and all nations."

The Progressive pointed out that Roosevelt had omitted the first eight words of this passage from Lincoln, eight words which are the most famous of all, namely: "With malice toward none; with charity for all." The atrophy of progressive values in modern American politics appears strikingly in this deletion, just as in the omission, from the marble wall of the new Jefferson Memorial in Washington, of the words in the Declaration of Independence about governments "deriving their powers from the consent of the governed" and the revolutionary "Right of the People" to "alter or abolish" any form of government they feel is not serving them well. Freud wrote a whole book on the significance of slips of the tongue and other apparently trivial manifestations of "The Psychopathology of Everyday Life". Semantic alterations like the above have an equally profound meaning in what might be termed "political psychopathology."

● The final result of the strike of Negro soldiers at the Tucson, Ariz., air base was not, as stated in the last issue, a partial defeat, but rather complete victory. The former strikers now get more pay and work fewer hours. The Tucson Committee for Interracial Understanding, which sent out the original erroneous report, has since then corrected it.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Warsaw

"Even I, as President of the United States, am not fully informed of the whole story. I still do not know all the facts about the recent events in Warsaw. As new information comes every day, we will get a clearer picture about the whole situation."

Thus Roosevelt tried to reassure the representatives of six million Polish Americans (a lot of votes) who called on him on October 11 (Pulaski Day). We may be sure that Roosevelt knows a great deal more about the Warsaw betrayal, in which he participated passively, than we do yet and than he will ever tell us. Even from what little we have been permitted to know, "Warsaw" is coming to have much the same connotations of moral infamy that "Lidice" and "Maidenek" have for us. Last month, this department told as much of the story as was known up to October 3, when the Polish underground army surrendered to the Germans. In order to get "a clearer picture about the whole situation", we add the salient facts that have come out since then. As more information comes out in the future, we will print that, too. Readers are invited to send in data.

¶ The Nazis tried to capitalize on the betrayal. They accepted the insurgents as military prisoners—instead of shooting them out of hand. (What has become of the 200,000 civilian "hostages" is still unknown; perhaps their mass grave has been decorated by the SS.) German propaganda praised "the heroic defense of Warsaw by an army of last-ditch patriots who, having been twice abandoned by their ostensible allies, are now beginning to realize their only salvation must come from the Reich." Polish war prisoners in Germany have been permitted to remove the letter "P" from their clothes—"in recognition of the heroic defenders of Warsaw." (*N. Y. Times*, Oct. 7)

Later reports are that the Germans have begun massacring the Warsaw prisoners. Presumably, the Poles did not respond to these overtures.

¶ The Soviet press charged that General Bor had never been in Warsaw, that he was sitting comfortably far from the fighting line. This slander was exposed on October 5 by the capture of Bor in Warsaw by the Germans. The Kremlin's mouthpieces matched the Nazis in shamelessness, charging that the leaders of the Polish insurgents had "handed them over" to the Germans instead of taking them into the Russian lines. "The followers of Pilsudski," commented the Red Army's organ, *Red Star* (quoted in *N. Y. Times* for Oct. 12), "have an old tradition of cooperation with the Germans, and General Bor at the decisive moment acted in the spirit of these traditions." And this after the surrender had been forced by the failure of the Russians themselves to support the uprising!

¶ "Before Bor's uprising he was roundly abused from Moscow for doing nothing. . . . *War and the Working Class* said in April 8, 1944: 'The official Polish press justifies the Government's waiting policy on the grounds that it is necessary to avoid a premature revolt and needless sacrifices. But this is obviously false and an evasion.' On June 3, *Pravda* said of the Polish Government in London: 'They cannot palm themselves off as representatives of the Polish people when the people begin to speak for themselves, when the people, permeated with implacable hatred of the German fascist invaders, are rising to holy struggle against the Hitlerite invaders.' A resolution of the Polish Patriots on June 22, 1944, accused the underground leaders of virtual treason because they had not risen to arms. . . . There were thirteen appeals from the Kosciuszko radio station in Moscow urging the Poles in Warsaw to rise and fight the Germans. . . . Against the Moscow claim that the uprising was done independently, Premier Mikolajczyk has turned over to the British and American governments a long record of negotiations and conversations with the Russians about the uprising."—Edwin L. James in *N. Y. Times*, Oct. 8.

¶ The disfavor with which Moscow looks on popular insurrection, and its preference for "orderly military methods," appears in this paraphrase of a *Pravda* justification of Warsaw: "The Red Army thus far has taken many cities, some by storm and more by outflanking. But the Red Army never took a city by the correlation of a frontal attack with an uprising within the city. The Red Army always discouraged such tactics." (Anna Louise Strong, writing from Moscow in *The Nation*, Sept. 2, 1944.)

¶ In addition to his desire to liquidate the cream of the Polish underground army, Stalin seems to have had another motive in calling off the Warsaw offensive: to occupy as much of the Balkans as possible with the Red Army. This contributed less to the speedy defeat of Germany than a continuation of the drive through Poland straight at the heart of Germany would have, but it enabled Russia to forestall England in the Balkans. The British occupation of Greece is a belated riposte to this stroke.

¶ Churchill's sudden trip to Moscow to talk to Stalin seems to have been motivated largely by his concern over the Polish situation. The repercussions of the Kremlin's betrayal seem to have been greater in British liblab circles than over here. Also, Roosevelt may have urged some action, since the Polish-American vote is a big one. At this writing, it looks as though some kind of a coalition government will be worked out, headed by Mikolajczyk, who seems to be personally acceptable to the Kremlin, and dominated by politicians "friendly" to Moscow. Warsaw, we may be sure, will not be mentioned—publicly, at least. As our President recently reminded us, one doesn't speak of the rope in the house of the hanged.

¶ A high (or low) point in Stalinist apologetics on Warsaw was the reply by the fellow-travelling Arthur Upham Pope, director of the Iranian Institute, to a lengthy and damning letter by Prof. Waclaw Lednicki in the *N. Y. Times* of Sunday, Sept. 10. The editors of the *Times* had evidently invited Mr. Pope to answer Prof. Lednicki's charges on Warsaw, and he had incautiously accepted the invitation. His "reply" took up 27 inches of type, of which 24½ may be disregarded since it did not even mention the Warsaw episode. (It is no trick at all for a fellow-traveller to write 24½ inches of "Teheran" rhetoric.) The 2½ inches Mr. Pope consecrated to Warsaw made just one point: that the Russians could not allow RAF planes to land on their airfields after dropping supplies to Warsaw because "every boy . . . knows that during a battle every square yard of earth, every minute, every man in a forward airfield is completely committed to complicated and urgent tactical necessities, and that the battle of Warsaw is too tough and too critical for operations not included in the battle plans." This was written a month after the Battle of Warsaw had been suspended; the forward airfields in *that* area must have been veritable havens of peace and quiet. And even if they had not been, Russia is very big and it would not seem an insuperable task for the nation that built Dneiperstroy to construct an airfield for the use

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of one or two RAF squadrons. . . . As a political debater, Mr. Pope is a good Iranian scholar.

The Story of Captain Kalugin

¶ "On August 3, at the first meeting between Premier Mikolajczyk and Mr. Stalin, Mr. Mikolajczyk pleaded for quick aid to the Polish patriots under General Bor. . . . Mr. Stalin replied: 'We shall be in Warsaw by the sixth of August. Don't you think General Bor's forces can hold out three days longer?' . . . The next meeting took place August 8. General Bor had been sending frantic appeals to his government in London for Allied help. These were relayed to Mr. Mikolajczyk in Moscow. Mr. Stalin told the Premier that something apparently had gone wrong with the plans to take Warsaw. . . . That day Allied officers in Moscow learned that Soviet reserves intended for the drive on Warsaw were being diverted to the Rumanian front.

"In the meantime, a Soviet parachute officer, Captain Konstantin Kalugin, who had been dropped behind Warsaw, reported to General Bor on August 5. He was given every opportunity to acquaint himself with the situation and the needs of the underground army. Captain Kalugin radioed a report to his superiors, but he received no acknowledgment. He decided his radio was out of order.

"On August 7, General Bor transmitted to London for relay to Moscow the message Captain Kalugin had tried to send. This time it was addressed to Stalin himself .

[The message asked for arms to be dropped on certain specified areas and concluded: "The heroic population of Warsaw trusts that in a few hours time you will give them armed support." . . .] The Kalugin report reached Moscow about the same time that it came into possession of the British and American governments. The Kremlin never acknowledged its receipt.

"The 'few hours' dragged into seven weeks. The rescue never came. Captain Kalugin took up a rifle and joined the Polish patriots in their last stand. Later, Soviet spokesmen disclaimed any knowledge of Captain Kalugin."

—Isaac Don Levine in *N. Y. World-Telegram*, Oct. 16

THE ADVANTAGES OF A POLITICAL EDUCATION

The editors of "PM" recently asked a number of prominent people when they thought the war would end. Lammot DuPont said "I haven't the faintest idea." Nicholas Murray Butler and Alfred P. Sloan of General Motors also said they didn't know. So did Frederick Nelson Myers, as follows:

"It's adventurism to make any comment except to say, and the only objective thing one can say, is that the war will be concluded when the complete utilization of all the Allied armies are militarily and politically crushing fascism in Italy and Germany in conjunction with the recognition on the home front that every one in America is responsible for production, the speediest output of the materials of war and a realization that strikes regardless of what the motive may be—such as the strike in Philadelphia—are holding up our armies from advancing through France."

Mr. Myers, also known as "Blackie" Myers, is vice-president of the National Maritime Union. His reply, so much richer grammatically and politically than the barren formulations of capitalists like DuPont and Sloan, shows clearly the educational value of regular attendance at the Workers School on East 13th Street. (Or is it now the Employees School?)

Why Herr Commandant Is Smiling (See Cover)

The gentleman with the grin is Major-General Erich Elster, of the German Army. He has just concluded negotiations for surrendering the 20,000 troops under his command to the Americans, represented here by Lieut. Col. Bertram Kalisch (left) and Lieut. Col. Jules K. French. The reason for Herr Kommandant's geniality is suggested by the following account of the incident in the *N. Y. Times* of Sept. 18 last:

"BEAUGENCY, France, Sept. 17.—All day long German forces of occupation from the Loire south to the Pyrenees have been converging on this ancient town to surrender their weapons to the U. S. Ninth Army. . . . What makes this surrender different is the decision to permit the Germans to keep their weapons until tomorrow.

"The Nazis have been exasperating the French people by marching insolently through villages en route to Beaugency, singing German battle airs, breaking into the goose step, and holding aloft their banners, emblazoned with swastikas. The French are losing the pleasure they might have expected to take in seeing 20,000 Germans surrender. The people are watching in silence as the gray-uniformed German columns file by. . . . They are frightened, and feel insulted.

"One reason the Germans were allowed to keep their artillery, grenades, machine guns and small arms fully loaded is Gen. Elster's distrust of the French Forces of the Interior. . . . Another reason little discussed in official quarters is the reluctance to have so rich a haul of weapons fall into the hands of French francs-tireurs, especially Communist elements, which are numerous here, it is said."

No wonder Herr Kommandant is smiling. And the two American colonels seem to get the joke, too.

The episode pictured on this month's cover may well be the most significant event in the entire war. The fate of postwar Europe will depend on the success or failure of the Allies in stifling revolutionary movements. And nothing is harder to deal with than a population which has guns. "Who made all men equal?" ran the frontier conundrum. The answer: "Not God and not Thomas Jefferson, but Mr. Colt."

Writing in *The Nation* for September 30, Albert Norden describes how the Allied High Command acted after the last war:

"Foch was so afraid of revolution that he refused to demand the immediate dissolution of the German General Staff. . . . He permitted the regiments that remained loyal to the Kaiser to march back into Germany fully armed and in close formation. Under the leadership of the General Staff, they stamped out the revolution and became the germ cells of Hitler's Wehrmacht. Two such unimpeachable witnesses as Clemenceau and Barthou agree that Marshal Foch permitted the German General Staff and the Ebert government to keep 5,000 machine guns 'so they could turn them against the revolution.'"

In the usual liblab fashion, Norden asked: "Will the supreme commander in 1944 repeat the mistakes of the supreme commander in 1919?" The answer is: he will, and they weren't mistakes. How long are we going to continue to be disappointed when tigers don't behave like lambs?

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Reconversion — to What?

Walter J. Oakes

THE Roosevelt Administration has in recent weeks sought to give the impression that the American people have no reason to fear the sudden collapse of Germany. "The fear of timid people," stated the Byrnes report on reconversion issued September 10, "may temporarily retard our return to full production and full employment. *But it will be only for a short time.*" (My italics—WJO) Perhaps, but it is not only the "timid people" who fear the development of permanent mass unemployment once the European war is over. The Administration shares with virtually the entire leadership of the capitalist class the fear of huge masses of unemployed equalling or exceeding those which prevailed during the 1930's.

And well may the leaders of the bourgeoisie fear permanent depression, for it is clear that they have no plan for reconversion—unless one wishes to call the statement of Acting War Production Board Chairman J. A. "Cap" Krug on September 5th a "reconversion plan." The text released by WPB states that "The Army, Navy, and major war agencies have unanimously agreed on a program designed to provide the utmost stimulus to reconversion when Germany is defeated, while at the same time protecting production necessary for the Japanese War." The heart of this "simple program" is to be found in its first point: "Remove almost all controls over materials immediately upon the defeat of Germany, except those that are absolutely necessary to assure the reduced measure of war production necessary to beat Japan. This means that all manufacturers can use any plant and any materials that are not needed for military production for any civilian production." To make the point as emphatic as possible it is further declared that "Industry is to be allowed in its own way . . . to do the swiftest and most effective job possible of restoring production, making whatever people want and affording maximum employment, just as quickly as possible."

Some people, of course, may call a proposal to permit private manufacturers to produce anything that they wish a "plan," but it was precisely this type of "planning" which lead to 15-20 million persons being unemployed in 1932-33. Nevertheless, the ballyhoo for "free private enterprise" seems to be sweeping everything before it—marking at least one important contrast between this country and all other major powers in the world. Democrats and Republicans vie with each other in heaping encomiums on the glories of "individual initiative" and attack each other for not doing more to foster the quickest possible return of industry to private business. The difference between them appears to be something like this: Roosevelt says that all controls will be removed once Germany is defeated, while Dewey says that this objective should have been announced six months ago. The public, as usual, is confused and bewildered over the entire question of reconversion, including the violent conflicts which it has generated. To understand where reconversion is heading, we must first examine the conflicts which have taken place over conversion and seek to separate the real issues from the phoney ones.

The Battle of WPB

So violent an eruption in public life as the resignation of Charles E. Wilson from his post as Executive Vice Chairman of WPB and the presidential mission of Donald M. Nelson, Chairman of WPB, into Chinese exile—especially on the eve of the election campaign—must have at its roots profound and far-reaching issues. On the surface, the conflict between Nelson and Wilson was a conflict between "early" reconversion and "late" reconversion. Nelson appeared to represent the point of view that reconversion must be started now, i.e. before X Day, in order to prevent widespread unemployment and business chaos from developing. On the other side, Wilson seemed to defend the position that the hardest fighting was still ahead, that business was completely occupied in meeting the demands of the military for war materiel and hence reconversion could not begin until after the defeat of Germany.

The focal point of the conflict was the Nelson plan, announced on June 18th. This plan consisted of four points: 1. The release of aluminum and magnesium from most current restrictions. 2. Permission to manufacturers to build post-war experimental models. 3. Permission to place unrated (without priority) orders for machine tools and equipment. 4. Permission to individual manufacturers to obtain "spot" authorization from WPB field offices to use facilities, manpower and materials not needed for the war effort in the expansion of civilian production. There was no objection to the first three points of the Nelson plan. It was the fourth point, which would actually have made possible a limited amount of additional civilian production prior to X Day, against which the advocates of "late" reconversion mobilized their forces. They took their case to the White House and succeeded in getting a compromise put through by which the issuance of the four orders, instead of taking place on July 1st, as Nelson had intended, was staggered, the "spot" authorization feature being delayed until August 15th. Then, just prior to the issuance of this order, Byrnes issued his manpower order giving effective veto power to the War Manpower Commission. The delays and conflicts have rendered the Nelson plan a dead duck. About the only civilian resumption that may be expected to take place prior to the surrender of Germany is the manufacture of some aluminum pots and pans.

The Real Forces Behind The Conflict

It should have been obvious from the beginning that the dispute over the timing of reconversion—to the extent that it was genuine—concealed much bigger and more impor-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tant issues. Moreover, it is difficult to accept the issue of timing at its face value—if for no other reason than the fact that by the time it became public it was clear that the end of the European war was imminent. In other words, there was no time for any real reconversion to take place prior to the end of hostilities in Europe. A dispute over timing could have had meaning only if there was a reasonable chance that Germany could survive for another year or more.

More importantly, reconversion in any substantial degree could not have taken place prior to X Day because WPB was completely unprepared for such an eventuality. Planning reconversion, while at the same time maintaining huge expenditures for war, requires a careful plant-by-plant analysis of every important manufacturing firm in the country so that it would be known which plants were making what products, which would be needed to maintain military production, which could be released for the resumption of civilian production, what materials and manpower were required, and whether or not they would be available. An analysis of this type in an economy as complex as ours is far from easy, and above all requires time. While there was much talk at WPB that such an analysis should be undertaken, it has not yet been done. This might well be why Krug announced a "reconversion plan" that requires no planning.

If, then, the dispute over timing concealed the real issues, what was involved in the Wilson-Nelson fight?

The major forces lined up behind the two chief protagonists were, on Wilson's side, big business and the military; on Nelson's, labor and small business. Big business has two reasons for opposition to early reconversion. First, and most important, delayed reconversion means the existence of millions of unemployed for many months. This would have a depressing effect on wages, thus guaranteeing that peacetime business would be as profitable as war business. Mass unemployment, furthermore, would also help those big business men who wished to smash the trade unions, especially those thrust upon them as a result of governmental policy during the war. Another reason big business opposes early reconversion is its fear that some competitors might have an advantage in the race to reach civilian markets. Big business is so completely tied up with war orders that it would be the last to be freed from war production and hence, in certain cases, might lose out to smaller competitors who would have a head start in the resumption of civilian manufacture.

This lineup was easily discerned at the topmost pinnacle of the WPB hierarchy at the time the Nelson plan was proposed. On that occasion, it will be recalled, nine of the Twelve WPB Vice Chairmen, all from big business, supported Wilson. The three who sided with Nelson were Joseph D. Keenan and Clinton Golden, the two labor Vice Chairmen and Maury Maverick, Chairman of the Smaller War Plants Corporation. Labor, in spite of the inept leadership exhibited by the trade union bureaucracies during the war, is not too well enamored of the promises for full employment under "free private enterprise." Small business has also watched the consolidation and growth of monopoly during the war with much apprehension and great misgivings. Lacking the financial resources of big business, it cannot afford to weather a storm of unemployment and deflation, even if it should be confined to a period of but six or nine months. It knows that it suffers first when cutbacks take place and therefore it demands that it be permitted to resume civilian production at once.

The High Command's Policy

The real significance of the conflict over reconversion, however, can only be seen when we examine the position of the military in opposing any reconversion prior to X Day and, above all, the relations that have developed during this war between big business and the military. The military's oppositon to the Nelson plan was immediate and vocal. In fact it has been the military who have taken the lead in the fight, permitting big business to hide behind its skirts.

The military supported its opposition to early reconversion not only by broadcasting calamitous statements by Gen. Somervell, head of the Army Service Forces, and his chief assistant, General Clay, about how war production was lagging behind schedule, but by taking every action within its power to prevent immediate reconversion from taking place even on a limited scale. First of all, earlier in the year as surpluses began to appear in certain materials, components and facilities, thus making practical suggestions for limited reconversion, the military stepped up its requirements and in effect procured everything within sight without regard for its genuine needs. This effectively stymied any possibilities of reconversion during the first part of the year.

Secondly, instead of furnishing prompt and realistic information on procurement plans to WPB, the military delayed so that the information was first forwarded to WPB at the very end of August, months too late. In addition, the post-X Day plans of the military are said to be far from realistic in many important respects, chiefly their failure to pare down excessive stocks of materiel.

It is interesting to recall, in this connection, the flare-up caused by the July *Progress Report* to WPB. This Secret publication, prepared under the direct supervision of V. Bassie and I. Kaplan, two leading statisticians within WPB, reviewed the progress of war output during the first half of 1944 and found that it was virtually up to schedule. Even in those areas where production lagged, it was concluded that this was not serious since (as revealed by Drew Pearson in his column of August 11th) the Army could fight for another fifteen months with the materiel on hand and coming off the assembly line. In other words, without ordering anything else, the Army could accomplish its tasks in Europe and probably still have considerable materiel left over for the Pacific offensive. The report was suppressed at the instigation of top officials in the War Department, and Bassie and Kaplan resigned.

Besides carrying its opposition to the Nelson "spot" authorization plan to the White House and securing the Byrnes manpower order, effectively emasculating the Nelson plan, it is reported that the military have issued orders to their representatives in the field to vote against any resumption of civilian production for which application may be made under the Nelson plan. In any case, only a handful of "spot" authorizations have so far been approved,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in spite of the protests of the WPB field staff and the obvious fact that many businesses, especially small ones, have been cut back, resulting in idle facilities, manpower and materials in many parts of the country.

Aside from such dubious arguments as "schedules are not being met" and "the morale of the men in the armed forces will suffer if reconversion takes place now while they are still engaged in heavy fighting," the chief argument of the military has been that "there has been a drift of workers from war production to civilian production, and that if this tendency continues the success of military operations will be endangered." This argument is as demonstrably false as the others, as the following summary table on manufacturing employment shows:

DECLINES IN MANUFACTURING EMPLOYMENT
(000 Omitted)

	Nov. 1943	July 1944	Size of Decline	Per Cent Decline
ALL MANUFACTURING ESTABLISHMENTS	17,685	16,467	1,218	6.9
Munitions Industries	10,365	9,447	918	8.9
All Other Manufacturing	7,320	7,020	300	4.1

November, 1943 represents the peak in munitions employment as well as in all manufacturing industries. The July, 1944 figures are the latest available. While munitions employment has declined by 9 per cent from its wartime peak, civilian manufacturing employment has also declined —by 4 per cent. So far as manufacturing is concerned, therefore, it is clear that the decline in munitions employment has not resulted in any increase in civilian employment.

What has happened to the 900,000 workers formerly employed in munitions industries? The answer is not hard to find. Practically all of them have been drafted into the armed forces, the net strength of the armed forces having increased from 10,150,000 in November, 1943 to 11,620,000 in July, an increase of 1,470,000. Since 70,000 of this increase represents females, 1,400,000 are able-bodied males, at least half of whom must have been drawn from munitions factories.

Due to increasing productivity, the natural result of intensive application of mass production techniques, munitions production has declined much less than munitions employment, the decline during the same period being but 3 per cent. Hence, no more than from two to three hundred thousand additional workers are all that is required (these are the official estimates) to enable munitions factories to meet military schedules. Without considering the well-known fact that in most cases—such as iron foundries and textile mills—the reason for the present labor shortage is the vicious low-wage policy of these industries, the entire alleged manpower shortage could be met if the Army reduced its demand on Selective Service. This could not possibly interfere with any military plans of the generals since the Army, due to lower casualties than anticipated in Europe, is already 350,000 above its authorized strength of 7,700,000. In addition, unemployment increased by 230,000 from April to July, 1944—providing an additional reservoir which by itself could meet the needed manpower requirements.

●

IS THERE A PSYCHOANALYST IN THE HOUSE?

"As chairman of the FEPC, I can assure you that President Roosevelt is deeply interested in these issues, and that he favors the early enactment of a permanent fair unemployment practice law. . . . "

—Chairman Ross of the FEPC, as quoted in "N. Y. Times" for Oct. 2, 1944.

FOOTNOTE ON INDIA

It is time that great Britain has a 2,000,000 Indian Army Composed of volunteers, to make up the world's biggest volunteer army as Mr. Churchill reports, but some informed U. S. officials say that a large proportion of the men joined up to get something to eat and are not well-equipped, highly trained soldiers.

—"U. S. News", Oct. 3, 1944.

HEIGHT-OF-SOMETHING-OR-OTHER DEPT.

To the Editor: I would like to see a change in the practice of newpapers and magazines of mentioning the names of other countries before "United States" or "America" when they are linked together. While "Anglo-American" or "Russo-American" may sound a bit smoother, I think it would be well to forego any speech rules and always place our country before the other nations.

By this time, our place in the world would seem to warrant this little privilege.

J. B. B. STUPKER
Lansdale, Pa.

—Letter-to-the-Editor, "Look", Oct. 31, 1944.

Toward an American Bonapartism?

The expressed reasons of the military for opposing early reconversion cannot be taken seriously. One is forced to conclude that either downright stupidity and incompetence, or unseemly political and personal ambitions motivate the behavior of the military. While a strong case can be made for the former interpretation, the weight of available evidence suggests that the strategists of the Pentagon are not disposed to relinquish their wartime positions of power and prestige without a battle.

In this far-reaching aim, the military leadership is aided by the very close alliance that has sprung up between it and big business. Most of the officers in charge of procurement, both in the Army and Navy, have been recruited from the ranks of big corporation executives. It is only human for their decisions to be motivated by the interests of the concerns from which they came and to which most of them expect to return. Even the career officers are influenced by the close contacts they have daily experienced with the "captains of industry." Numerous business associations and organizations have sprung up in the fields of heavy ordnance, aircraft and ships. These associations schedule regular meetings, attended by the highest-ranking military leaders and the leading corporation executives. Their discussions in recent months have centered around the problem of how to "perpetuate into peacetime the mutually advantageous close relations of wartime."

With due regard for its specifically American characteristics, this rapprochement has all the earmarks of a classic Bonapartist development. These powerful forces will try to control reconversion and thus to mold the future pattern of American social relations. If they succeed, and it is necessary to record that their chances of success are far better than a vague possibility, then reconversion will be a step in the direction of an American Bonapartist regime,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

i.e. a dictatorship functioning in the interests of the ruling class that attempts to raise itself above the daily vicissitudes of the class struggle.

Unemployment During Reconversion

How large will unemployment be if we have (a) 100 per cent successful prompt reconversion; or (b) if we have the kind of reconversion it seems likely we shall get? What are the prospects that maximum reconversion will be achieved? These are the two great questions about reconversion.

The answer to the first may be put in tabular form:

UNEMPLOYMENT DURING RECONVERSION
(000,000 Omitted)

	One Year After Defeat of Germany: Maximum Reconversion	One Year After Defeat of Germany: Probable Reconversion	One Year After Defeat of Japan
1. Direct Release from Munitions Industries	4.8*	4.8	8.7
2. Net Release from Armed Forces	1.6♯	1.6	6.6
3. Indirect Release from Non-Munitions Industries	4.0†	5.0	9.5
4. TOTAL GROSS RELEASE	*10.4*	*11.4*	*24.8*
5. "Evaporation"	2.8**	3.3	7.6
6. TOTAL NET RELEASE (Line 4 minus Line 5)	*7.6*	*8.1*	*17.2*
7. Normal Growth of Labor Forces	0.6	0.6	1.2
8. Unemployment Level Day European War Ends	1.0	1.0	1.0
9. TOTAL GROSS UNEMPLOYMENT (Lines 6 plus 7 plus 8)	*9.2*	*9.7*	*19.4*
10. Absorbed in Expansion of Civilian Output	4.0	2.5	8.0
11. PROBABLE NET UNEMPLOYMENT LEVEL (Line 9 minus Line 10)	*5.2*	*7.2*	*11.4*

Notes

* (*Line* 1): *Assuming a* 50% *cutback at the end of the European War. It is assumed that this war ends by Dec.* 31, 1944. *It is assumed, also, that the Pacific War will be over by the end of* 1945.

♯ (*Line* 2): *The Army plans to release two million men, net, in the first year after the end of the European War. The Navy, however, is expected to grow somewhat in this period, reaching a peak of four million men. Thus the net release from the armed forces will be slightly over one and a half millions.*

† (*Line* 3): *The decline in munitions employment will indirectly cause a decline of this amount in jobs in the distributive trades and services and other industries which have kept the munitions workers functioning. The largest single decline will be that of Government workers, whose numbers may be expected to decrease by at least a million.*

** (*Line* 5): *"Evaporation" is a term applied to those persons now employed in war work or serving in the armed forces who will probably not be in the labor market after the war. Specifically: military casualties; youths now working or in the army who will presumably complete their education; persons* 60 *years of age or over now working; married women who took jobs because the family wage-earner had been drafted.*

Note on Agricultural Employment: The above table is confined to the non-agricultural labor force. Since farm production today greatly exceeds pre-war levels with a considerably smaller labor force, it seems unlikely that agriculture can absorb more than an insignificant number of those released from war production and the armed forces.

The magnitude of the postwar problem, even if maximum reconversion takes place, may be appreciated if one considers that full employment has been achieved by the present war economy (the 1,000,000 level of unemployment now existing being the irreducible minimum, mostly due to labor turnover) and that there has been an increase of about 60 per cent in total physical product since 1939. Furthermore, even allowing for the virtual disappearance of durable consumer goods as a result of the war, civilian standards of living have improved on the average about 12 per cent since 1939. In other words, if our economy is to sustain a standard of living no better than that which existed prior to the war, then the size of our unemployment problem will be roughly measured by all those who are supported at present by the $90 billion the government is spending for war purposes . Returning to prewar levels of civilian output, therefore, means severe depression.

But what if maximum reconversion does *not* take place? Here the analysis must be largely political in character, for it involves an appraisal of the government's probable reconversion policy. In view of the failure to provide for adequate unemployment compensation or dismissal pay, and the general likelihood that big business will succeed in delaying reconversion, plus the fact that there will be important bottlenecks in such components as fractional horsepower motors, and that normal amount of incompetence may be expected, it would seem conservative to raise our estimate of probable unemployment during 1945 to over seven million.

Seven million is our realistic estimate of probable unemployment. It may well be that it is around this level of unemployment that the danger exists of a depression psychology developing and taking hold. If any development of this type should take place, then the indirect effects on unemployment (which we estimated at 4-5 million) of a 50 per cent cutback in munitions output will be considerably greater. In this event, the anticipated large civilian demand for automobiles, radios, etc. will vanish as people hoard their savings and release them only for absolute necessities. Then, the end of the Japanese war will not result in any post-war boom but, unless immediate State intervention is forthcoming on a very large scale, will mean depression exceeding in severity the worst period of the 1930's.

To be sure, an intelligent and planned reconversion—the one possibility that seems absolutely excluded on the basis of present developments—would plan the development of new employment opportunities, resulting in full employment and a considerable increase in average standards of living. The technical prerequisites for such an expansion exist, but it does not seem possible that they can be harnessed for the satisfaction of human wants under capitalism.

Roosevelt's Strategy

To a "realistic" politician, much of the above analysis must seem esoteric. After all, there is a war to be won, capitalism must be saved and, above all, there was an election to be won. Roosevelt, one of the most astute politicians ever produced by the capitalist class, cannot be en-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tirely unaware of the probable trends in employment and unemployment and their consequent effects on future economic prospects. For a long time, to be sure, he attempted to keep the question of reconversion out of the election by a policy of ignoring it. The result was that the battle within WPB got out of hand. When confronted with the choice of accepting either the resignation of Nelson or Wilson, it was clearly the latter who had to go. The loss of Wilson could not possibly affect as many votes as might the departure of Nelson.

The only permanent solution, however, was for Roosevelt to get rid of both Wilson and Nelson and at the same time steal the Republican's thunder by announcing that business would be allowed to handle reconversion in its own way. From the last week in August to the first week in September, a remarkable change occurred in the Washington atmosphere. It was more than the end of the summer's heat wave. Campaign strategy dictated the avoidance, if possible, of a fight over reconversion policy. So, to the special War Production Board meeting that preceded the Krug announcement of September 5th, were dispatched White House emissaries Lauchlin Currie and Isidor Lubin. The newly-adopted White House line of suspending all controls immediately after X Day was unanimously approved. War Manpower Commissioner McNutt discovered that the manpower shortage was not quite so acute as he had thought. The Army discovered that schedules, on the whole, were being well met and that in many cases they could reduce them. Where previously there had been acrimonious controversy, sweetness and light now prevailed.

The master's voice explains the contortions of the lackeys. But what strategy does the master expect to pursue? There seems to be only one possible explanation. Roosevelt and his advisers know that under present reconversion policy, mass unemployment in 1945 is inevitable. The only question that is open is the size of unemployment that may be expected, with the probable limits being from 5-10 million depending on whether reconversion in phase one is successfully administered or bungled. The primary objective of the strategy, of course, is to get past the hurdle of the fourth term election. That, fortunately, will be over on November 7th, before any mass unemployment can possibly develop, even if Germany capitulates within the next week or two.

Towards the P. W. E.

Once the election is recorded history and the Roosevelt bureaucracy is retained in power, then the real strategy will start to unfold. If, miracle of miracles, private industry can do the job and mass unemployment is both limited and temporary, then the question of reconversion can be postponed until after the Japanese are polished off. If, on the other hand, as Roosevelt must undoubtedly expect, the unemployment curve rapidly reaches five million and starts moving beyond this point, there will surely be anguished protests from affected citizens. And, if the public demands that the Government do something about the unemployment situation, the wartime powers will not have been abandoned. They will only have been suspended. There will be a war on with Japan. The controls can be reinstituted. Roosevelt, once again, will have been the saviour of capitalism. Only this time, of course, State intervention will have to be more far-reaching than in 1933. More than a paltry few billions will have to be spent on public works. But various forms of war outlays, both open and disguised, can easily be found. This will be in keeping with the trend toward a Permanent War Economy, which I analyzed in the February issue of POLITICS. It is the type of diet on which a Bonapartist development thrives.

Deflation or Inflation?

Judging by the recent drop in the stock market, Wall Street must still have excellent connections with Washington. In spite of tremendous publicity efforts to convey an impression of confidence in the future, bearish sentiment was never so heavy as it is today in Washington. These people know that a recession lasting six to nine months after the defeat of Germany is inevitable. It will bring with it a decline in national income of 20 to 25 per cent, a decline more rapid in rate than in 1930. It will create a minimum of 5,000,000 unemployed, with a strong probability that actual unemployment will exceed this estimate by 50-100 per cent. There is obviously nothing to be optimistic about in such a picture.

The shape of the future, however, will not be forthcoming until toward the end of 1945, i.e. toward the end of the war with Japan. Will this inevitable recession snowball into a full-scale depression of the 1930-1939 variety, or will it be overcome by the powerful inflationary forces that are at work, resulting in a tremendous boom? Recession and depression, or recession and inflation? Either is possible, but the latter is clearly the more probable. Washington is hedging, the outstanding example being Price Administrator Chester Bowles. Bowles, who is being carefully groomed in certain quarters for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1948, usually finds the inflationary dangers the ones to be guarded against. At the same time, however, he permits his OPA research division to predict serious depression. Meanwhile, the expected abandonment of the "Little Steel" formula definitely indicates that Roosevelt prefers to preside over inflation rather than depression during his last years as President.

Much depends on whether big business has the reconversion throttle completely in its own hands, or whether it is forced to rely on more remote methods of control. It is unlikely that the former can be achieved without a Republican victory, not a likely possibility from the present look of things. If big business cannot perfect its monopolistic position through its traditional methods of operation in time of depression, it must then attempt to secure its ends through a deliberately-fostered period of inflation. Inflation, if it is not too rapid, would certainly be more palatable from a political point of view. It would also facilitate unloading the cost of the war onto the backs of the masses. And, under cover of an inflationary boom lasting some years, great strides can be taken toward the establishment of a Bonapartist regime under Roosevelt's first or second successor.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Commonnonsense

WHEN they began to build Rockefeller Center, I remember that they made a huge hole in the ground, and I asked one of the workers: "What is this going to be, a lake?" He looked at me with profound sympathy, shook his head and said: "A new building."

In later years I learned through experience that whenever Americans want to build some solid structure, they always raze the existing houses, even if they are new and in perfectly good condition. Then they make a big hole, lay the foundations, and the building shoots up in a few days.

But when you try to do the same thing with ideas, and dare dig a teeny little hole in the ground of their concrete prejudices and medieval mental encrustations, woe to ye, ill-advised critic! You are a negativist, a defeatist, a murderer of hopes, a corruptor of youth, an alien. You must start being constructive from the very first step: no holes, no foundations, no tearing down of old buildings. The foundations must rest on the dear old red chimney of the crumbling, historic brownstone mansion. Thus, solidly rooted in mid-air, the political thought of modern Americans will stand the criticism of the fussy old aunts of Uncle Sam.

Sorry, but that won't do for me. If a certain amount of gullibility, and the corresponding amount of mistakes are the tax every man must pay to the cruel Fates in his life, I have paid already, and abundantly so, and I can produce receipts proving that I have been constructive ALL THE WAY. When I compelled myself to accept fascism, it was only because I was constructive. Nothing else.

The readers of POLITICS who come around whining because they have been put in a dark room, with all the lights out, should be given: Candy (1½ box), Rays of Hope: 1 (in extreme cases 2, diluted), and a good friendly hug with a few words of consolation whispered into their ears.

I personally have no patience with people who ask: "Won't you PLEASE be constructive for once?" My answer is: "NO."

WHEN I saw Churchill's picture in the *Times* the other day, sitting with Humbert (Stab-in-the-back) Savoia, the Smiling Fool whose public-relations man Churchill has recently become, I felt sick. Not that I expected anything better from Churchill. God forbid! I want my enemies to be and *stay* bad. I wouldn't go "Hats Off" on the man, *à la manière de PM*, for anything under the sun. But there is a limit to insult, especially when the recipients of insult are down and out. He had the nerve to tell the Italians that Great Britain would never forget the stab in the back, but of course, if the Italians toiled enough and gave enough sweat, blood and tears, who knows, perhaps someday they would be given the Xmas gift of Liberty.

The Italian troops did their full share at the time of the stab in the back. They deserted by the thousands, as they had in Greece, thus giving proof of a political maturity and dignity the highest-ranking Allied authorities not only were unable to understand, but opendly ridiculed as cowardice. Give me an Italian deserter any time, and I will know what will become of him: a free, dignified, new man. The New European. Then give me a great General, and I will hand him over to a sculptor and say: Make a big, big monument to this one: *he deserves it.*

Too bad, I'll soon have to give up abusing Churchill. Only a few days ago I saw an angry editorial against him, imagine where? In the fascist wop-sheet, *Progresso Italo-Americano,* with quotations from Churchill's fascist speeches of 1927, 1938, etc. Just think of that. Even the fascists hate him now, after all he's done for them. No, there can be no doubt: He IS a third-rate statesman.

WHAT a consolation for future civilized men and women to know that a certain town was wiped out by friendly action, while another one was leveled by enemy action. How clearly those distinctions will be noticeable on stones and on the bones of the dead, while it will be so hard to tell whether friendly or enemy action rearmed the fascists all over Europe and shifted the guilt from Kings and fat exploiters on to the peoples themselves.

WHEN I was working in Washington, as an expert on a part of the world where neither I nor any of my co-experts had ever been, I was told to write propaganda against fascism, for the enlightment of those in the above-unmentioned part of the world, who were taught fascist theories by their Cardinals, Bishops and similar salesmen of God's Word.

"Fine!" I said. "This is the real task for me! I shall tell them about my own foolishness; it will enlighten them no end."

My boss, a High-Priest of Antifascism, was horrified. "None of that Dostoyevsky stuff," he said. "No self- accusations."

"But I have been a fool and I have a right to have been a fool," I said. "Please, let me be a fool, let me at least call myself a fool."

Nothing doing. In the end, since I insisted so much, he jokingly called me a fool, to please me. "Well," I said, "All right, but tell me now: Am I a fool to BE a fool, or to KNOW that I'm a fool and warn the others of it?" But not only was I forbidden to declare myself a fool; I was ordered to continue being one. So this was my sad fate: after fascism had put a ban on my intelligence, antifascism was putting a ban, *the same ban,* on my stupidity. Well, since I didn't want to impair the war effort, I accepted the verdict that branded me with an intelligence I didn't have, and went on acting as if I understood everything. (I shouldn't call it the war effort; PEACE EFFORT is the word, for that's what everybody was doing there: trying to stay at peace with their superiors.) But my misfortunes had only begun. All propaganda was to be worded in such a way that it wouldn't hurt the fascist dictators in that part of the world, because the majority of them had their crimes copyrighted by United Nations, Inc. My intellectual defecations were to be confined to Italy. The "Cloaca Culparum" was to be either Hitler or Mussolini. I had the choice between the two.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Now frankly, how can a fellow always stay chained to the past like an intellectual convict? Memories, hates and loves fade away in the distance, and I found it hard to be incensed by the dried-out evil that still emanated from my recollections of 1938, especially as there was so much fresh, virulent dirt around me that I couldn't help repeating to myself: "This smells familiar! perhaps I'll remember fascism much better if I am allowed to fight it right here!"

But the rules were strict. We, the Guests of the People, were to have no sense of smell, no brains, no opinion: it was all right for us to accept an American salary, but to protest against American hypocrisy was unfair, ungrateful, even UNPATRIOTIC.

So I began to look for compensation in dreams. I saw fascists and asked them: "Will you help make me angry again with YOUR OWN, personal, un-american kind of nonsense? I just cannot remember what you sound like, with all the noise here." Finally, since I didn't want to have a breakdown, I asked my boss to let me employ a fascist and have him sit in front of me in my office and try his propaganda on me all day long.

"There are so many antifascists around me," I said, "and such a great variety of them, that I feel tempted to become a fascist again."

"But why?" he asked. "Why?"

"Because," I said, "there must be a difference between us."

THE other day, I interviewed a few Tuscans to find out what they thought of the liberation of our towns. One of them was an optimist. "Never mind," he said: "the bridge of Santa Trinita destroyed by the Germans will be rebuilt by the Americans with air-cooling. After all," he added, "we should be proud that we have served as the testing ground for the greatest inventions of our time. Mass-production of ruins you may call it, all right, but don't put the emphasis on the ruins: that's a sign of old-age. Put the emphasis on the mass-production, for that's the thing of the future. Do you know that if the job had been left to the corrosive agents of Nature alone, it would have taken centuries to just chew off the edges of the stones? Nature is terribly slow. But look at Science! Along comes a Liberator, bang bang, out of one building it makes three, each with a character of its own, with a romantic touch, a personality, a shadow of its own that future American, British and German art students will measure, copy, photograph and carry home as a souvenir."

This man was too much of an optimist for my taste, so I looked up a pessimist. "In the beginning I too was an optimist," he said. "A real optimist. I felt that we would soon see the abundance all the Italian governments have failed to give us ever since 1870. The Allies have so much liberty at home that they can easily afford to dump the surplus on our countries. And there is of course liberation for all tastes and purses. Nobody will be forgotten. Our rich country is liberated of its gold surplus in the amount of two dollars a day for each liberator. Some people are liberated of their houses and belongings, others of their lives, still others of their dignity. See, for example, the old antifascists who were forced to accept the armistice and the theory that everybody (except the King and the Generals) is guilty. They had been burdened by their dignity for twenty years, and now they too are free."

"Another reason for my optimism was the destruction of our art treasures."

I couldn't help interrupting him here: "Are you crazy? You mean to tell me you were *pleased* with the destruction of our art treasures?"

"Sure," he said. "You don't know what this means. Imagine, to be finally left alone, all alone, with no German tourists pestering us with their Kultur and their Nordic perspiration; no American self-made men misbehaving all over the place and paying for every damn piece of junk; no British milords asking us to provide a picturesque background for their imperial Life-line. Privacy! Give me privacy or give me death! Oh to be unhistorical, without esthetic value, completely uninteresting!

"Yes, that was a great dream, but it didn't last long. I think they will continue to come. Liberation is a fraud. Instead of less ruins, there will be more. And they will come, all of them; like blow-flies, they will buzz around our misery. Some will want to repair the ruins with plastic, others will want to see the sites, the wives of American generals will come to see the towns they have been given as birthday presents by their husbands. No, there will be no privacy for us."

VICTORY. *Comes, lights up the horizon and the* hearts, and before you know it, it's gone; you have just the ashes and the dead, and instead of ambush, hostage-killing, fight and vengeance, a good chance to grieve, to starve, to see your children die in peace. Makes me sad for those soldiers who are there, on the line, with ideals all theirs, reserved to the military, "requisitioned for the exclusive use of our boys", and forbidden to everybody else at home or abroad. Their job is that of transforming a torture-chamber into a cemetery; a place of terror and of hope into a place without terror and without hope. Victory.

NICCOLO TUCCI

NOTE ON SOVIET CULTURE

The peculiar problems of study and scholarship in the Soviet Union are illuminated by a little item in Literature and Art, for April 8 of this year. The article, signed T. Motyleva, is entitled "The Overcoming of Scholasticism." It relates that a girl student presenting herself for examination on the subject of Cervantes displayed excellent knowledge of all the Russian and foreign critical literature on the great Spanish writer. But when the judges asked the candidate: "And what did Comrade Stalin say about Cervantes?" she did not know the answer.

The passage the girl did not know was an utterance of Joseph Stalin made in the year 1932 in the course of an interview with Emil Ludwig.

"If great people are worth anything at all," Ludwig reports him as saying, "it is only to the extent that they correctly understand definite conditions and know how to alter them. If they fail to understand these fantasies, they will put themselves in a quixotic position."

The poor candidate's inability to quote this commonplace use of the word "quixotic" is adduced by Mrs. Motyleva as evidence of insufficient scientific preparation on the part of candidates for degrees in Russian universities. She regards this as the symptom of a still unconquered "scholasticism."

Literature and Art publishes the Motyleva correspondence without comment. We can only do the same.

—"Russian Affairs", October, 1944.

Subscribers, Please Notice

If you have a postal unit (or zone) number, and it does not now appear on the wrapper in which the magazine is sent to you, please let us know at once your unit number. This is necessary if you are to be sure of receiving your copy promptly.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Behind the Philadelphia Strike

Nat Glazer and Frederick Hoffman

ON August 1, six thousand employees of the Philadelphia Transportation Company (PTC) went on strike. Since the PTC provides all the bus, trolley and subway transportation in the city, this meant that the whole Philadelphia area, third most important war production region in the country, was paralyzed. For five days, despite the combined efforts of the union, the Government, and, finally, the Army, the strike remained 100% effective. Finally, on August 6, after all strikers were threatened with immediate induction into the Army, the men began to drift back to work.

The immediate cause of the strike was the upgrading of six Negro PTC workers from maintenance work to motormen's jobs. Practically the entire press, liberal and conservative, therefore, classified the strike as one more explosion of racial prejudice. We shall try to show, however, that this interpretation is superficial: that actually the real significance of the Philadelphia transit strike is that it represents a new technique of union-busting, mixing well-known ingredients in a new way to produce a potent reaction. The story seems worth telling because it seems likely that similar techniques will be used to undermine unions in the postwar period.

Background of the Strike

Involved in the drama were (1) the PTC; (2) leaders of the Philadelphia Rapid Transit Employees Union (PRTEU)—a company union which had been defeated by (3) The Communist-dominated, CIO—affiliated Transport Workers Union (TWU); and (4) the workers.

The PTC is the product of six years of reorganization of the Philadelphia Rapid Transit Co., which collapsed in the depression under a load of watered stock. The PRT enjoyed, before its demise, a long period of "industrial peace" under the leadership of E. A. Mitten, who put the company on its feet after it had almost been bankrupted by a series of destructive strikes. Mitten set up the PRT Employees Union which "represented" PRT and later PTC employees without opposition until 1937. That year, TWU, the AFL's Amalgamated Association of Street Car and Electric Railway Employees (AA) and the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen sent in organizers.

Last year, TWU forged ahead. It showed its strength in November, 1943, when supervisors refused to allow wearers of TWU buttons to take out cars. The lockout was soon turned into a flash strike with 2500 men out, and most of the system stopped. Soon after, the State Labor Relations Board ordered an election.

At this point, the Fair Employment Practice Committee started holding hearings on discrimination in the PTC. While 13% of the population of Philadelphia is colored, only 5% of PTC's employees are. Negroes were limited by the old PRTEU contract to jobs in the maintenance department. Though a desperate shortage had developed in the operating department during the war, resulting in over-working of the men and use of women, Frank Carney, president of the PRTEU, refused to allow any modification of the contract. The company refused to act against the contract and an FEPC order issued December 27, 1943 was ignored.

This impasse prevailed when the union election campaign started. AA sound trucks blared out *"A vote for CIO is a vote for Niggers on the job!"* The PRTEU had made its position clear in Washington. Only the TWU stood for no-discrimination, trying at the same time to raise less embarrassing issues. On March 14 the workers showed they cared more about getting higher wages than about keeping Negroes off the cars, and gave the TWU a straight majority over PRTEU and AA combined (the Brotherhood did not run) in both operating and maintenance departments.

This seemed to settle the Negro question, since that had been made a major issue in the election, but the company continued to stall. A contract providing $3 million more pay ($300 per man per year) and no discrimination was approved by union members at a mass meeting June 30th. But it was not until the War Manpower Commission refused to make referrals to discriminating employers that the PTC finally announced it would accept Negro applicants—nearly four months after the PRTEU contract had become invalid. Several Negroes were accepted and were due to go out on practice runs August 1.

Although the men had twice come out against the anti-Negro policy—by voting for TWU and approving the contract—leaders of the PRTEU went on with anti-Negro agitation in the car-barns. Stickers, personal letters, private talks made the point that Negroes threatened PTC workers' jobs. At a meeting called July 18 by a TWU shop steward 100 men agreed to "get sick" the day PTC began to train Negroes. A week later, Frank Carney (former president of the PRTEU) spoke at a similar meeting—but the TWU knew of this one in advance and James Fitzsimon, International vice president attended. Of the 500 men working out of the barn only 75 were present. When the vote came on the "get sick" resolution it was 32 for, 13 against 30 not voting. Obviously, the anti-Negro campaign was not an overwhelming success.

Fitzsimon went to tell A. A. Mitten (industrial relations head of PTC—son of E. A. Mitten) of the meetings. Mitten knew of them already, but pooh-poohed the whole thing. Nothing would happen, he said.

The Company Union Calls a Company Strike

But less than a week later, early on the morning of August 1, workers returning from night-shift were clogging PTC switchboards with complaints of long waits. By 6

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A.M. not a bus or trolley was running and committees of strikers were arguing with the subway crews in efforts to get them to quit work also. The public was in a complete fog, undispelled by statements from company, union, or strikers for eight hours. The public was not alone in its confusion. Except for a small minority who had attended the pre-strike meetings and had been spoken to privately, the 6000 PTC workers were also in the dark as to why they were out. Men who took out vehicles that morning were stopped by strikers and company men and told they were "sick".

But if not more than a few hundred were in the planning, why such a complete success? There were several reasons. (1) A cleverly planned "bandwagon appeal": "It looks bad when ours is the only line running. It makes us look like rats". (2) The job security appeal: "Do you want those Negroes pushing you out of your job? Do you want your family to starve?" (3) Race prejudice: "Do you want to live with them, eat with them, sleep with them?" (4) Many of the men didn't mind taking a vacation. They work very long hours: "The only way I can get a day off is to put in sick. . . . I don't care if this thing lasts a week or a couple of weeks."

The most important factor, however, was only hinted at by the TWU after the first few days and was verified by the writers in interviews with PTC employes after the strike. One worker's story runs: "I didn't know a thing about the strike until I reported to the barn. When I walked over to check out the guy told me—he's a company man—that I was sick: too sick to take a car out. I would have gone to work, but you couldn't get a car." Another worker said it was the "power of intimidation" on the part of supervisors that kept him from going to work. Others also stated that it was company influence that made the stoppage a success. Aside from the direct instigation, we know that power was shut off on subway and "el" lines before noon the day of the strike. Several workers said that power was shut off in their districts earlier. This was the final blow to any possible back-to-work movement the first day of the strike; the company thus made it impossible for any one to return to work on these lines.

What happened, in short, was that many workers realized that the company was backing the "strike". It was safer to jump on the bandwagon and "see what would happen".

At noon, the first day of the strike, the self-appointed leaders of the walkout called the first meeting, and presented to 1000 workers a prepared resolution and a prepared rationalization for their actions—most of them still did not know why they were out. The resolution, unanimously accepted, stated that their jobs were jeopardized by the upgrading of Negroes having greater seniority from other departments (one third to one half of the operators had been taken on since the beginning of the war and had very little seniority). "This is not a labor movement," the resolution continued in an obvious appeal for middle class backing: "It is not sponsored by any union . . . PTC men and women are simply trying to protect their jobs and seniority." The seniority argument was a fake. *Department*, not *company* seniority determines working conditions and order of dismissal, so that Negroes coming in from another department do not threaten the jobs of those already in that department. That evening, 3500 workers met and the job of "explaining" why they were out and getting them properly excited was completed by Frank Carney and James McMenamin (formerly active for the Brotherhood).

High company officials were strangely silent about the whole affair. In the November "button strike," which lasted a few hours, the company launched a bitter attack on the TWU for "interruption of war industries." But now for six long days not one statement on the strike came from the company, either explaining, denouncing or urging. Mitten refused to join TWU, FEPC and community representatives in a radio program in which the speakers urged the men to go back to work. The executive committee of the PTC did not meet at all during the strike; ordinarily, it meets every few days. The PTC allowed the strikers to meet in the carbarns all through the strike, displaying a remarkable tolerance. It made no attempt to operate cars, and did not call for police protection.

The Role of the TWU

Where were the recently chosen representatives of the workers, the officials of the TWU? Admittedly taken "completely by surprise", they expressed confidence it would be over by nightfall, and spent the first day touring car-barns with army and navy officers, urging the men not to disrupt the war effort. But as laughter, hoots and boos—or just silence—greeted them, their mood rapidly changed from "confidence" to panic. By nightfall they were calling for troops, and in a telegram to Attorney-General Biddle claimed "sinister forces in the background indicate this is a deliberate attempt to incite race riot for the purpose of disrupting the war effort." Union officials added that these sinister forces were nothing less than Nazi agents and Hitlerite spies—though in saner moments they accused the more tangible leaders of the defeated company union.

Continuing to act as if their spy story interpretation of the stoppage had some relation to reality, the TWU called a meeting of shop stewards at which Harry Sacher, union general counsel, denounced the strike leaders as "traitors to mankind" and "Hitlerite rats".

> One of the rank-and-filers got to his feet and demanded the floor. He was given a chance to talk. He called for a general membership meeting where the workers could "democratically" vote on whether they wanted to go back to work. MacMahon Internat. sect-treas. answered that TWU was a democratic union but he would be dammed if it would ever "take a vote on whether we support our government or stab it in the back." Which settled the voting question.—(*PM*, Aug. 6)

The fact that the company was hardly mentioned by the union until the fourth day of the strike further served to undermine any confidence on the part of the workers in the union leadership. Though an immediate exposure of company implication in the stoppage would have had far more effect than the fabrication of fairy tales about "Hitlerites", it was impossible for the TWU's Communist leadership to do so. The communist line today demands

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that any "disruption of war effort" be interpreted as the work of foreign agents, since to attack big employers is to undermine "national unity". The leadership of the union was so afraid of attacking the company that it did not call a meeting of its thousands of members during the course of the entire six-day strike. For at such a meeting, it would have been impossible to avoid the real issue, which was the company's instigation and support of the strike.

Gradually, as PTC complicity became more evident, party-line orthodoxy was overcome by practical union necessity. But the first vigorous charge of collusion was not made by the union until the very last day of the strike.

At present, only a small part of the whole story is known. We don't know all the reasons behind the company support of the strike. Obviously, it hoped to separate the membership from the union by showing that the union did not really represent the workers since they could go on a strike which the union opposed. The union's asserted ignorance of what was going on among the men, and its ineffectiveness in getting the men back to work certainly reduced its prestige. The contract, which the PTC signed right after the strike, gave union members fifteen days to withdraw under a maintenance-of-membership-agreement escape clause. According to the union, less than 600 withdrew, and 100 of these have asked to be reinstated, but an opposition "rank and file" group says 1400 had withdrawn. In any case, these are large figures, and show considerable weakening of the union despite the favorable contract it has negotiated. The PTC can be sure it will have a less effective opponent when it starts to renegotiate the contract in February.

Army technique did not follow the usual pattern. The first army appeal, issued on the third day of the strike (no troops had yet been ordered in) was very mildly worded. Typical reactions to it were: "If I take a trolley out, will the government stop a brick from coming through my window?" "We didn't start the thing and we don't intend to be guinea pigs in the back to work movement." The complete silence of the company made no one anxious to take the first step. This fear of company retaliation was not unfounded; Dorothy Hibbs, a motorwoman, claimed she was forced to resign because she was the first to obey the army deadline and take a car out after the strike was over. Department of Justice investigators have acknowledged other such reports.

A Federal Grand Jury has been investigating since the end of the strike. It is unlikely that the indictment will name any but minor officials of the company—that is the way out when a big corporation is caught redhanded. But whether the PTC gets away with it or not, we can be sure this won't be the last attempt to break up a union by combining appeals to prejudice, threats, confusion, and false strike situations.

DEPARTMENT OF THE FOUR FREEDOMS

Dear Editor: I think it would be advisable for the advertising men of the country . . . to propagate the Four Freedoms by inserting in all ads such phrases as "Remember that tolerance is the foundation of democracy," and "Buy Bonds to assure the Four Freedoms." In that way, the American public will unconsciously become acquainted with our Four Freedoms. (Signed) Louis Pollock, Norwich, Conn.

—"P. M.", May 25, 1944

EUROPEAN NEWSREEL

They Took the Wrong Train. In *Darkness at Noon,* Koestler tells the story of a Balkan Communist who, after many years of imprisonment in his home country, is finally freed, goes to Moscow and—after a short probing by the GPU—is immediately jailed. The man goes mad and repeats constantly:"I must have taken the wrong train, I must have taken the wrong train." Cf. the following dispatch to the New York Times: "Communist leaders in Bulgaria are doing everything they can to prevent extremists in the party from agitating for Sovietization of the country. . . . When a few hotheads tried to create the impression that the country would be Sovietized, they were strongly reprimanded by their leaders. . . . The Russian army is not paying attention to local Communists. On several occasions, when local Communists in the provinces tried to displace city officials and take matters in their own hands, they were ordered by the Russian military authorities to return the jobs to the old officials until orders were received from the government in Sofia. The cold shoulder that the Russians gave local Communists sobered extremists and aided the government to restore order." These poor fellows must also feel that they took the wrong train!

The "Ambassador of the Steel Trust." De Gaulle has been forced to make many concessions to the pressure from the Left, yet he still tries to straddle on the main issues. While he comes out for nationalizations and planned economy, his cabinet includes men like Minister-of-Finance Jean Lepercq. Lepercq was one of the most influential contact men of the Schneider-Creusot Steel interests. Before the war, he led the economic department of the French Embassy in Prague and was commonly nicknamed "The ambassador of the Steel Trust." Lepercq negotiated French purchases of Skoda shares and of shares of the Brno armament factories. After Munich, it was Lepercq who again negotiated the sale of a majority of these shares to the Herman Goering concern. Lepercq has long been closely associated with the *Banque de l'Union Européenne,* i.e. the bank which handled the Czech interests of Schneider-Creusot. Indeed, a true representative of a new era!

They Feared an 1871. The London *Tribune* some time ago ran an article on the FFI in which it charged that De Gaulle, the theoretician of the *Armée de Métier,* was far from welcoming the popular uprising and favored instead the organization of a closely knit *Maquis de Métier.* This view has been startlingly confirmed by the story of the Paris uprising as published in the Paris paper *Action.* From this and other articles it becomes clear now that: (1) The National Council of Resistance did not provoke the uprising but only assumed its direction after the people of Paris had risen. (2) The inner De Gaulle circle in the National Council, appalled at the action of the masses, contacted the Swedish Consul asking him to arrange a truce with the Germans. According to the *Action* story, the consul when he was told that there were "Communists" among the Resistance forces, said: "You see why the uprising must be avoided at all costs." Negotiations were then carried on and a truce was signed with the Germans. However, the military staff of the FFI and a majority of the National Council rejected the truce and proposed to continue the battle. These masses had not stopped fighting anyhow.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

French Literary Intelligence. It can now be revealed that a great number of leading French writers took an active part in the underground movement. André Malraux, under the name of Colonel Berger, fought in the Maquis and led a Resistance column. Aragon was a leader of the Underground in the Drome Department. Gabriel Chevalier organized resistance in the Correze Department. Jean Paulhan, the former editor of the *Nouvelle Revue Française,* was the moving spirit behind a number of clandestine publications in which leading French writers continued to express uncensored views. Among the best known regular literary contributors to the Resistance press are: Paul Claudel, Paul Valéry, François Mauriac, Charles Vilrac, Paul Eluard, Georges Duhamel, Roger Martin du Gard, Jean Cassou, Jean Guehenno and Vercórs (whose *Silence de la Mer* has recently been translated). Jean Prevost and Jean Giradoux were killed by the Nazis shortly before the liberation of Paris. The latter had been writing a sort of chronicle of the occupations, called *Le Dossier.* Jacques Decour, founder of the first clandestine literary magazine *Lettres Françaises* was shot even before the first issue came off the press. At least fifteen books were published underground, among them new works by Vercórs, Cassou, Aragon, Mauriac and Eluard. Malraux has been working at a book on Lawrence of Arabia to be called *The Demon of the Absolute.* He stated, however, in an interview, that he would not complete the book before the final defeat of Nazism, his activity in the FFI now requiring all his time and energy.

Food as a Weapon. After the last war, Herbert Hoover used American food relief shipments as a potent weapon against revolution in Europe. Food was delivered to Hungary only after the revolutionary government had been overthrown. Large shipments were sent to Austria to strengthen the Social-Democratic government against the radical workers. UNRRA will play a similar role after this war. Both the Russian and American governments are well aware of the terrific importance of food for war-torn Europe. This explains recent difficulties within UNRRA. Russia does not permit any food shipments from UNRRA to Poland—she wants to remain in sole control. Tito's Committee has refused permission to UNRRA to distribute supplies in Yugoslavia—the theory being that those who control food also control votes.

French CP Line Changed Again. Until the middle of this year, the French Communist Party maintained that the sole and only task of the Resistance movement was to drive out the Germans. It attacked all those who demanded basic social reforms for post-war France: "All this talk can only divert us from the war effort." Suddenly, in August, they made a complete aboutface and are now most vocal in favoring nationalizations and expropriations. Their Belgian counterparts, however, still maintain the old line. This seems to be one more proof of the revolutionary temper in France today. The CP is afraid to lose its influence if it opposes the mass demands. If an American CP-er should advance the present program of the French CP for this country, he would be called a Trotskyist wrecker.

Is Morgenthau a Schlemihl? Milton Mayer recently called the author of the re agriculturalization plan for German a Schlemihl, a Dummkopf—the implication being that the whole plan was not to be taken too seriously. I am afraid that Mayer is wrong. Publication of the plan at this time was not quite a masterpiece of psychological warfare (who cares for this sort of thing anyhow, except the *Nation?*) but it is not at all the plan of a madman and corresponds to very definite interests here. The liblabs are still worried about new cartel agreements with Germany after the war, but why should American Big Business not prefer the wiping out of German competition to cartel agreements? Wiping out of I.G.-Farben is preferable to agreement with it. Foreign trade interests here it is true, are disturbed about the plan; "our best markets always have been those of highly industrialized nations . . . we cannot hope to speed expansion of world economy by destroying industrial segments of that economy," says Eugene Thomas, chairman of the National Foreign Trade Council. But Dupont and Standard Oil have no reason to feel that way—quite the contrary.

The situation in England, however, is quite different. Imperial Chemical knows that it can never dominate the European market by itself; it therefore wants an agreement with German industry to put up a united front against U. S. interests. That's why the *London Times* and the *Economist* oppose the plan in no uncertain terms. Says the *London Times:* "Neither the division and dismemberment of German territory nor petty controls over every aspect of German life and administration—which are nowadays the theme of most irresponsible discussion— are in themselves effective instruments of restraint. . . . A war-ravaged Europe can afford less than ever before to dispense with the contribution which German skill and German labor can make to her recovery."

One Constructive Proposal, at Least! Allen Michie has just published a book, *Keep the Peace through Air Power.* Michie looks into the history of British colonial policy in India and the Near East where air power has been most effectively used to bomb rebellious tribes into submission. Men and women of these tribes were kept away from homes and fields by air blockade until they were ready to accept the British ultimatum. Mr. Michie now thinks that this startling method should not be restricted to the Orient but should be applied against Germany as well. If, for example, a factory in the Ruhr should be caught manufacturing forbidden weapons, warning should go out to the workers to get out of the town and to take their belongings with them. The factory and town would then be obliterated by the Allied aerial police force. Michie thinks that after a while the workers would themselves exercise a close surveillance of production and would keep the manufacturers in line. John Chamberlain gave Michie's book a very sympathetic review: "Technically, his plan has much to commend." Amen.

Carpetbaggers of 1944. The *London Daily Mail* recently published a Paris dispatch—which must have passed thru British censorship—charging that American businessmen in uniform had been transported by the Army to Paris, to renew business connections, and that "a grave and tragic misunderstanding is going to arise between Britain and the U. S." General headquarters, of course, denied the story. It has now been announced that the *Daily Mail* correspondent has been ordered by Headquarters to leave Paris. . . . Honi soit qui mal y pense!

French Underground papers have repeatedly charged that representatives of American Big Business in Portugal, during the last year, have been in contact with German businessmen for the sale of the latters' French interests. The Algiers Socialist paper *Fraternité* claims that the German Tobis Film Co. (which is owned by the Nazi govern-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ment) sold all its French interests to Warner Bros. last year—the sale to be effective after the liberation of France.

I Decide Who is a Democrat. Goering once said, when queried about the continued employment of some half-Jews by the German air force: "*I* decide who is a Jew." Now Stalin decides who is a democrat. The Polish government, which contains more leftists than any other Polish cabinet since Pilsudski, does not meet the test; it is, says Stalin, composed of reactionary feudal landholders and Fascist officers and does not even want to return to the democratic constitution of pre-Pilsudski days. But in Rumania things are quite different; there Stalin makes no difficulties for the Royal regime. He has, indeed, been quick to affirm that "no disturbance of the existing social and political conditions is intended." The Rumanian Royal regime has murdered hundreds of thousands of Jews in recent years, the *Siguritsa* (security police) has been dreaded by Socialists and Communists all over Europe because it used the most horrible Gestapo methods long before Hitler came to power. What does this matter? "I decide who is a democrat."

Guest editorial: United Nations Unity. "The preference given by the Soviets in this moment to the Balkan campaign cannot have only military reasons—as the British occupation of Greece is not motivated by purely military considerations. The Allies are mapping out spheres of influence. In a peace settlement it is easier to confirm established facts than to establish new ones. The accomplished fact will be Soviet influence thru the Balkans and Poland, and British influence thruout the Mediterranean. Military arguments, sound as they appear to be, fit marvelously into political ambitions and plans." (Dorothy Thompson, *New York Post,* October 9.)

Footnote: In this connection, a very significant episode has been almost completely overlooked. The preliminary Russo-Bulgarian armistice was signed on September 10. However, a month later the Bulgarians had not yet evacuated the Greek province of Thrace. The Russians did not put any pressure on the Bulgarians to this effect—on the contrary. The Bulgarian delegate in charge of the administration services was a prominent Stalinist very evidently taking his orders from Moscow. A look at the map will easily explain this curious situation: Since Bulgaria is occupied by the Red Army, the Bulgarian occupation of Thrace means that for the first time the Russians have an outlet to the Mediterranean and have bypassed the Dardanelles. . . . One day after Churchill arrived in Moscow it was announced that the Bulgarians had accepted Allied armistice terms and had evacuated Thrace! Churchill can be tough if he wants to. No wonder that "the announcement caused considerable relief in London, especially in Tory circles." (*New York Times,* October 15.)

LOUIS CLAIR

THE ETHICS OF THE DETECTIVE STORY

From Raffles to Miss Blandish

George Orwell

NEARLY half a century after his first appearance, Raffles, "the amateur cracksman," is still one of the best known characters in English fiction. Very few people would need telling that he played cricket for England, had bachelor chambers in the Albany and burgled the Mayfair houses which he also entered as a guest. Just for that reason he and his exploits make a suitable background against which to examine a more modern crime story such as *No Orchids for Miss Blandish.* Any such choice is necessarily arbitrary—I might equally well have chosen *Arsene Lupin,* for instance—but at any rate *No Orchids* and the Raffles books* have the common quality of being crime stories which play the limelight on the criminal rather than the policeman. For sociological purposes they can be compared. *No Orchids* is the 1939 version of glamourised crime, *Raffles* the 1900 version. What I am concerned with here is the immense difference in moral atmosphere between the two books, and the change in the popular attitude that this probably implies.

At this date, the charm of *Raffles* is partly in the period atmosphere, and partly in the technical excellence of the stories. Hornung was a very conscientious and, on his level, a very able writer. Anyone who cares for sheer efficiency must admire his work. However, the truly dramatic thing about Raffles, the thing that makes him a sort of by-word even to this day (only a few weeks ago, in a burglary case, a magistrate referred to the prisoner as "a Raffles in real life"), is the fact that he is *a gentleman.* Raffles is presented to us—and this is rubbed home in countless scraps of dialogue and casual remarks—not as an honest man who has gone astray, but as a public-school man who has gone astray. His remorse, when he feels any, is almost purely social: he has disgraced "the old school," he has lost his right to enter "decent society," he has forfeited his amateur status and become a cad. Neither Raffles nor Bunny appears to feel at all strongly that stealing is wrong in itself, though Raffles does once justify himself by the casual remark that "the distribution of property is all wrong anyway." They think of themselves not as sinners but as renegades, or simply as outcasts. And the moral code of most of us is still so close to Raffles's own that we do feel his situation to be an especially ironical one. A West End clubman who is really a burglar! That is almost a story in itself, is it not? But how if it were a plumber or a greengrocer who was really a burglar?

**Raffles, A Thief in the Night* and *Mr. Justice Raffles, by* E. W. Hornung. The third of these is definitely a failure, and only the first has the true Raffles atmosphere. Hornung wrote a number of crime stories, usually with a tendency to take the side of the criminal. A successful book in rather the same vein as *Raffles* is *Stingaree.*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Would there be anything inherently dramatic in that? No —although the theme of the "double life," of respectability covering crime, is still there. Even Charles Peace in his clergyman's dog-collar seems somewhat less of a hypocrite than Raffles in his Zingari blazer.

Raffles, of course, is good at all games, but it is peculiarly fitting that his chosen game should be cricket. This allows not only of endless analogies between his cunning as a slow bowler and his cunning as a burglar, but also helps to define the exact nature of his crime. Cricket is not in reality a very popular game in England—it is nowhere near so popular as football, for instance—but it gives expression to a well-marked trait in the English character, the tendency to value "form" or "style" more highly than success. In the eyes of any true cricket-lover it is possible for an innings of ten runs to be "better" (i.e. more elegant) than an innings of a hundred runs: cricket is also one of the very few games in which the amateur can excel the professional. It is a game full of forlorn hopes and sudden dramatic changes of fortune, and its rules are so ill-defined that their interpretation is partly an ethical business. When Larwood, for instance, left a trail of broken bones up and down Australia he was not actually breaking any rule: he was merely doing something that was "not cricket." Since cricket takes up a lot of time and is rather expensive to play, it is predominantly an upper-class game, but for the whole nation it is bound up with such concepts as "good form," "playing the game", etc., and it has declined in popularity just as the tradition of "don't hit a man when he's down" has declined. It is not a twentieth-century game, and nearly all modern-minded people dislike it. The Nazis, for instance, were at pains to discourage cricket, which had gained a certain footing in Germany before and after the last war. In making Raffles a cricketer as well as a burglar Hornung was not merely providing him with a plausible disguise; he was also drawing the sharpest moral contrast that he was able to imagine.

Raffles, no less than *Great Expectations* or *Le Rouge et le Noir,* is a story of snobbery, and it gains a great deal from the precariousness of Raffles's social position. A cruder writer would have made the "gentleman burglar" a member of the peerage, or at least a baronet. Raffles, however, is of upper-middle class origin and is only accepted by the aristocracy because of his personal charm. "We were in Society but not of it," he says to Bunny towards the end of the book; and "I was asked about for my cricket." Both he and Bunny accept the values of "Society" unquestioningly, and would settle down in it for good if only they could get away with a big enough haul. The ruin that constantly threatens them is all the blacker because they only doubtfully "belong." A duke who has served a prison sentence is still a duke, whereas a mere man-about-town if once disgraced, ceases to be "about town" for evermore. The closing chapters of the book, when Raffles has been exposed and is living under an assumed name, have a twilight-of-the-gods feeling, a mental atmosphere rather similar to that of Kipling's poem, *Gentleman Rankers:*

> A trooper of the forces—
>
> I, who kept my own six horses! etc.

Raffles now belongs irrevocably to the "cohorts of the damned." He can still commit successful burglaries, but there is no way back into Paradise, which means Piccadilly and the M.C.C. According to the public-school code there is only one means of rehabilitation: death in battle. Raffles dies fighting against the Boers (a practiced reader would foresee this from the start), and in the eyes of both Bunny and his creator this cancels his crimes.

Both Raffles and Bunny, of course, are devoid of religious belief, and they have no real ethical code, merely certain rules of behaviour which they observe semi-instinctively. But it is just here that the deep moral difference between *Raffles* and *No Orchids* becomes apparent. Raffles and Bunny, after all, are gentlemen, and such standards as they do have are not to be violated. Certain things are "not done," and the idea of doing them hardly arises. Raffles will not, for example, abuse hospitality. He will commit a burglary in a house where he is staying as a guest, but the victim must be a fellow-guest and not the host. He will not commit murder*, and he avoids violence wherever possible and prefers to carry out his robberies unarmed. He regards friendship as sacred, and is chivalrous though not moral in his relations with women. He will take extra risks in the name of "sportsmanship," and sometimes even for aesthetic reasons. And above all he is intensely patriotic. He celebrates the Diamond Jubilee ("For sixty years, Bunny, we've been ruled over by absolutely the finest sovereign the world has ever seen") by despatching to the Queen, through the post, an antique gold cup which he has stolen from the British Museum. He steals, from partly political motives, a pearl which the German Emperor is sending to one of the enemies of Britain, and when the Boer War begins to go badly his one thought is to find his way into the fighting line. At the front he unmasks a spy at the cost of revealing his own identity, and then dies gloriously by a Boer bullet. In this combination of crime and patriotism he resembles his near-contemporary Arsene Lupin, who also scores off the German Emperor and wipes out his very dirty past by enlisting in the Foreign Legion.

It is important to note that by modern standards Raffles's crimes are very petty ones. Four hundred pounds' worth of jewelry seems to him an excellent haul. And though the stories are convincing in their physical detail, they contain very little sensationalism—very few corpses, hardly any blood, no sex crimes, no sadism, no perversions of any kind. It seems to be the case that the crime story, at any rate on its higher levels, has greatly increased in bloodthirstiness during the past twenty years. Some of the early detective stories do not even contain a murder. The Sherlock Holmes stories, for instance, are not all murders, and some of them do not even deal with an indictable crime. So also with the John Thorndyke stories, while of the Max Carrados stories only a minority are murders. Since 1918, however, a detective story not containing a murder has been a great rarity, and the most disgusting details of dismemberment and exhumation are commonly exploited. Some of the Peter Wimsey stories, for instance, seem to point to definite necrophilia. The Raffles stories, written

*He does once contemplate murdering a blackmailer. It is, however, a fairly well established convention in crime stories that murdering a blackmailer "doesn't count."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from the angle of the criminal, are much less anti-social than many modern stories written from the angle of the detective. The main impression that they leave behind is of boyishness. They belong to a time when people had standards, though they happened to be foolish standards. Their key phrase is "not done." The line that they draw between good and evil is as senseless as a Polynesian taboo, but at least, like the taboo, it has the advantage that everyone accepts it.

So much for *Raffles*. Now for a header into the cesspool. *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*, by James Hadley Chase, was published in 1939 but seems to have enjoyed its greatest popularity in 1940, during the Battle of Britain and the blitz. In its main outlines its story is this:

Miss Blandish, the daughter of a millionaire, is kidnapped by some gangsters who are almost immediately surprised and killed off by a larger and better organised gang. They hold her to ransom and extract half a million dollars from her father. Their original plan had been to kill her as soon as the ransom-money was received, but a chance keeps her alive. One of the gang is a young man named Slim whose sole pleasure in life consists in driving knives into other people's bellies. In childhood he has graduated by cutting up living animals with a pair of rusty scissors. Slim is sexually impotent, but takes a kind of fancy to Miss Blandish. Slim's mother, who is the real brains of the gang, sees in this the chance of curing Slim's impotence, and decides to keep Miss Blandish in custody till Slim shall have succeeded in raping her. After many efforts and much persuasion, including the flogging of Miss Blandish with a length of rubber hosepipe, the rape is achieved. Meanwhile Miss Blandish's father has hired a private detective, and by means of bribery and torture the detective and the police manage to round up and exterminate the whole gang. Slim escapes with Miss Blandish and is killed after a final rape, and the detective prepares to restore Miss Blandish to her family. By this time, however, she has developed such a taste for Slim's caresses that she feels unable to live without him, and she jumps out of the window of a skyscraper.

Several other points need noticing before one can grasp the full implications of this book. To begin with its central story is an impudent plagiarism of William Faulkner's novel, *Sanctuary*. Secondly it is not, as one might expect, the product of an illiterate hack, but a brilliant piece of writing, with hardly a wasted word or a jarring note anywhere. Thirdly, the whole book, recit as well as dialogue, is written in the American language: the author, an Englishman who has (I believe) never been in the United States, seems to have made a complete mental transference to the American underworld. Fourthly, the book sold, according to its publishers, no less than half a million copies.

I have already outlined the plot, but the subject-matter is much more sordid and brutal than this suggests. The book contains eight full-dress murders, an unassessable number of casual killings and woundings, an exhumation (with a careful reminder of the stench), the flogging of Miss Blandish, the torture of another woman with redhot cigarette ends, a strip-tease act, a third-degree scene of unheard-of cruelty, and much else of the same kind. It assumes great sexual sophistication in its readers (there is a scene, for instance, in which a gangster, presumably of masochistic tendency, has an orgasm in the moment of being knifed), and it takes for granted the most complete corruption and self-seeking as the norm of human behaviour. The detective, for instance, is almost as great a rogue as the gangsters, and actuated by nearly the same motives. Like them, he is in pursuit of "five hundred grand." It is necessary to the machinery of the story that Mr. Blandish should be anxious to get his daughter back, but apart from this such things as affection, friendship, good-nature or even ordinary politeness simply do not enter. Nor, to any great extent, does normal sexuality. Ultimately only one motive is at work throughout the whole story: the pursuit of power.

It should be noticed that the book is not in the ordinary sense pornography. Unlike most books that deal in sexual sadism, it lays the emphasis on the cruelty and not on the pleasure. Slim, the ravisher of Miss Blandish, has "wet, slobbering lips": this is disgusting, and it is meant to be disgusting. But the scenes describing cruelty to women are comparatively perfunctory. The real high-spots of the book are cruelties committed by men upon other men: above all the third-degreeing of the gangster, Eddie Schultz, who is lashed into a chair and flogged on the windpipe with truncheons, his arms broken by fresh blows as he breaks loose. In another of Mr. Chase's books, *He Won't Need It Now*, the hero, who is intended to be a sympathetic and perhaps even noble character, is described as stamping on somebody's face, and then, having crushed the man's mouth in, grinding his heel round and round in it. Even when physical incidents of this kind are not occurring, the mental atmosphere of these books is always the same. Their whole theme is the struggle for power and the triumph of the strong over the weak. The big gangsters wipe out the little ones as mercilessly as a pike gobbling up the little fish in a pond; the police kill off the criminals as cruelly as the angler kills the pike. If ultimately one sides with the police against the gangsters it is merely because they are better organised and more powerful, because, in fact, the law is a bigger racket than crime. Might is right: vae victis.

As I have mentioned already, *No Orchids* enjoyed its greatest vogue in 1940, though it was successfully running as a play till some time later. It was, in fact, one of the things that helped to console people for the boredom of being bombed. Early in the war the *New Yorker* had a picture of a little man approaching a news-stall littered with papers with such headlines as GREAT TANK BATTLES IN NORTHERN FRANCE, BIG NAVAL BATTLE IN THE NORTH SEA, HUGE AIR BATTLES OVER THE CHANNEL, etc., etc. The little man is saying, "*Action Stories*, please." That little man stood for all the drugged millions to whom the world of the gangsters and the prize-ring is more "real," more "tough" than such things as wars, revolutions, earthquakes, famines and pestilences. From the point of view of a reader of *Action Stories*, a description of the London blitz, or of the struggles of the European underground parties, would be "sissy stuff." On the other hand some puny gun-battle in Chicago, resulting in perhaps half a dozen deaths, would seem genuinely "tough." This habit of mind is now extremely widespread. A soldier sprawls in a muddy

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

trench, with the machine-gun bullets crackling a foot or two overhead and whiles away his intolerable boredom by reading an American gangster story. And what is it that makes that story so exciting? Precisely the fact that people are shooting at each other with machine guns! Neither the soldier nor anyone else sees anything curious in this. It is taken for granted that an imaginary bullet is more thrilling than a real one.

The obvious explanation is that in real life one is usually a passive victim, whereas in the adventure story one can think of oneself as being at the centre of events. But there is more to it than that. Here it is necessary to refer again to the curious fact of *No Orchids* being written—with technical errors, perhaps, but certainly with considerable skill—in the American language.

There exists in America an enormous literature of more or less the same stamp as *No Orchids*. Quite apart from books, there is the huge array of "pulp magazines," graded so as to cater for different kinds of fantasy but nearly all having much the same mental atmosphere. A few of them go in for straight pornography but the great majority are quite plainly aimed at sadists and masochists. Sold at threepence a copy under the title of Yank Mags*, these things used to enjoy considerable popularity in England, but when the supply dried up owing to the war, no satisfactory substitute was forthcoming. English imitations of the "pulp magazine" do now exist, but they are poor things compared with the original. English crook films, again, never approach the American crook film in brutality. And yet the career of Mr. Chase shows how deep the American influence has already gone. Not only is he himself living a continuous fantasy-life in the Chicago underworld, but he can count on hundreds of thousands of readers who know what is meant by a "clipshop" or the "hotsquat," do not have to do mental arithmetic when confronted by "fifty grand," and understand at sight a sentence like "Johnnie was a rummy and only two jumps ahead of the nut-factory." Evidently there are great numbers of English people who are partly Americanised in language and, one ought to add, in moral outlook. For there was no popular protest against *No Orchids*. In the end it was suppressed, but only retrospectively, when a later work, *Lady, Don't Turn Over*, brought Mr. Chase's books to the attention of the authorities. Judging by casual conversations at the time, ordinary readers got a mild thrill out of the obscenities in *No Orchids*, but saw nothing undesirable in the book as a whole. Many people, incidentally, were under the impression that it was an American book re-issued in England.

The thing that the ordinary reader *ought* to have objected to—almost certainly would have objected to, a few decades earlier—was the equivocal attitude towards crime. It is implied throughout *No Orchids* that being a criminal is only reprehensible in the sense that it does not pay. Being a policeman pays better, but there is no moral difference, since the police use essentially criminal methods. In a book like *He Won't Need It Now* the distinction between crime and crime-prevention practically disappears. This is a new departure for English sensational fiction, in which till recently there has always been a sharp distinction between right and wrong and a general agreement that virtue must triumph in the last chapter. English books glorifying crime (modern crime, that is—pirates and highwaymen are different) are very rare. Even a book like *Raffles*, as I have pointed out, is governed by powerful taboos, and it is clearly understood that Raffles's crimes must be expiated sooner or later. In America, both in life and fiction, the tendency to tolerate crime, even to admire the criminal so long as he is successful, is very much more marked. It is, indeed, ultimately this attitude that has made it possible for crime to flourish upon so huge a scale. Books have been written about Al Capone that are hardly different in tone from the books written about Henry Ford, Stalin, Lord Northcliffe and all the rest of the "log cabin to White House" brigade. And switching back eighty years, one finds Mark Twain adopting much the same attitude towards the disgusting bandit Slade, hero of twenty-eight murders, and towards the Western deperadoes generally. They were successful, they "made good," therefore he admired them.

In a book like *No Orchids* one is not, as in the old-style crime story, simply escaping from dull reality into an imaginary world of action. One's escape is essentially into cruelty and sexual perversion. *No Orchids* is aimed at the power-instinct. which *Raffles* or the Sherlock Holmes stories are not. At the same time the English attitude towards crime is not so superior to the American as I may have seemed to imply. It too is mixed up with power-worship, and has become more noticeably so in the last

*They are said to have been imported into this country as ballast, which accounted for their low price and crumpled appearance. Since the war the ships have been ballasted with something more useful, probably gravel.

Just received from England:

THE RUSSIAN ENIGMA

by

Anton Ciliga

This book, first published in France in 1938 under the title, "Au Pays du Grand Mensonge", is one of the most important studies of Soviet Russian society ever made.

The author, a Yugoslavian Communist, lived in Russia as a worker and Party member for ten years: 1926-1936. He describes in intimate detail the Russia of the NEP period, of the Trotsky-Stalin struggle, and of the first Five Year Plan. The latter half of the book is a fascinating and unique description of prison life in Russia.

The special value of Ciliga's book, apart from its material, is that it describes Soviet life from the viewpoint of a revolutionary-socialist worker who participated in it.

304 pages **$1.50 a copy, postpaid**

Order from: Politics,

45 Astor Place, New York 3, N. Y.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

twenty years. A writer who is worth examining is Edgar Wallace, especially in such typical books as *The Orator* and the Mr. J. G. Reeder stories. Wallace was one of the first crime-story writers to break away from the old tradition of the private detective and make his central figure a Scotland Yard official. Sherlock Holmes is an amateur, solving his problems without the help and even, in the earlier stories, against the opposition of the police. Moreover, like Dupin, he is essentially an intellectual, even a scientist. He reasons logically from observed fact, and his intellectuality is constantly contrasted with the routine methods of the police. Wallace objected strongly to this slur, as he considered it, on Scotland Yard, and in several newspaper articles he went out of his way to denounce Holmes by name. His own ideal was the detective-inspector who catches criminals not because he is intellectually brilliant but because he is part of an all-powerful organisation. Hence the curious fact that in Wallace's most characteristic stories the "clue" and the "deduction" play no part. The criminal is always defeated either by an incredible coincidence, or because in some unexplained manner the police know all about the crime beforehand. The tone of the stories makes it quite clear that Wallace's admiration for the police is pure bully-worship. A Scotland Yard detective is the most powerful kind of being that he can imagine, while the criminal figures in his mind as an outlaw against whom anything is permissible, like the condemned slaves in the Roman arena. His policemen behave much more brutally than British policemen do in real life — they hit people without provocation, fire revolvers past their ears to terrify them, and so on—and some of the stories exhibit a fearful intellectual sadism. (For instance, Wallace likes to arrange things so that the villain is hanged on the same day as the heroine is married.) But it is sadism after the English fashion: that is to say it is unconscious, there is not overtly any sex in it, and it keeps within the bounds of the law. The British public tolerates a harsh criminal law and gets a kick out of monstrously unfair murder trials: but still that is better, on any count, than tolerating or admiring crime. If one must worship a bully, it is better that he should be a policeman than a gangster. Wallace is still governed to some extent by the concept of "not done." In *No Orchids* anything is "done" so long as it leads on to power. All the barriers are down, all the motives are out in the open. Chase is a worse symptom than Wallace, to the extent that all-in wrestling is worse than boxing, or Fascism is worse than capitalist democracy.

In borrowing from William Faulkner's *Sanctuary*, Chase only took the plot; the mental atmosphere of the two books is not similar. Chase really derives from other sources, and this particular bit of borrowing is only symbolic. What it symbolises is the vulgarisation of ideas which is constantly happening, and which probably happens faster in an age of print. Chase has been described as "Faulkner for the masses," but it would be more accurate to describe him as Carlyle for the masses. He is a popular writer—there are many such in America, but they are still rarities in England—who has caught up with what it is now fashionable to call "realism," meaning the doctrine that might is right. The growth of "realism" has been the great feature of the intellectual history of our own age. Why this should be so is a complicated question. The interconnection between sadism, masochism, success-worship, power-worship, nationalism and totalitarianism is a huge subject whose edges have barely been scratched, and even to mention it is considered somewhat indelicate. To take merely the first example that comes to mind, I believe no one has ever pointed out the sadistic and masochistic element in Bernard Shaw's work, still less suggested that this probably has some connection with Shaw's admiration for dictators.

Fascism is often loosely equated with sadism, but nearly always by people who see nothing wrong in the most slavish worship of Stalin. The truth is, of course, that the countless English intellectuals who kiss the arse of Stalin are not different from the minority who give their allegiance to Hitler or Mussolini, nor from the efficiency experts who preached "punch," "drive," "personality" and "learn to be a Tiger Man" in the nineteen-twenties, nor from that older generation of intellectuals, Carlyle, Creasey and the rest of them, who bowed down before German militarism. All of them are worshipping power and succussfull cruelty. It is important to notice that the cult of power tends to be mixed up with a love of cruelty and wickedness *for their own sakes*. A tyrant is all the more admired if he happens to be a bloodstained crook as well, and "the end justifies the means" often becomes, in effect, "the means justify themselves provided they are dirty enough." This idea colours the outlook of all sympathisers with totalitarianism, and accounts, for instance, for the positive delight with which many English intellectuals greeted the Nazi-Soviet pact. It was a step only doubtfully useful to the USSR, but it was entirely unmoral, and for that reason to be admired: the explanations of it, which were numerous and self-contradictory, could come afterwards.

Until recently the characteristic adventure stories of the English-speaking peoples have been stories in which the hero fights *against odds*. This is true all the way from Robin Hood to Popeye the Sailor. Perhaps the basic myth of the Western world is Jack the Giant Killer. But to be brought up to date this should be renamed Jack the Dwarf Killer, and there already exists a considerable literature which teaches, either overtly or implicitly, that one should side with the big man against the little man. Most of what is now written about foreign policy is simply an embroidery on this theme, and for several decades such phrases as "play the game," "don't hit a man when he's down" and "it's not cricket" have never failed to draw a snigger from anyone of intellectual pretensions. What is comparatively new is to find the accepted pattern according to which (a) right is right and wrong is wrong, whoever wins, and (b) weakness must be respected, disappearing from popular literature as well. When I first read D. H. Lawrence's novels, at the age of about twenty, I was puzzled by the fact that there did not seem to be any classification of the characters into "good" and "bad." Lawrence seemed to sympathise with all of them about equally, and this was so unusual as to give me the feeling of having lost my bearings. Today no one would think of looking for heroes and villains in a serious novel, but in lowbrow fiction one

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

still expects to find a sharp distinction between right and wrong and between legality and illegality. The common people, on the whole, are still living in the world of absolute good and evil from which the intellectuals have long since escaped. But the popularity of *No Orchids* and the American books and magazines to which it is akin shows how rapidly the doctrine of "realism" is gaining ground.

Several people, after reading *No Orchids*, have remarked to me, "It's pure Fascism." This is a correct description, although the book has not the smallest connection with politics and very little with social or economic problems. It has merely the same relation to Fascism as, say, Trollope's novels have to nineteenth-century capitalism. It is a daydream appropriate to a totalitarian age. In his imagined world of gangsters Chase is presenting, as it were, a distilled version of the modern political scene, in which such things as mass bombing of civilians, the use of hostages, torture to obtain confessions, secret prisons, execution without trial, floggings with rubber truncheons, drownings in cesspools, systematic falsification of records and statistics, treachery, bribery and quislingism are normal and morally neutral, even admirable when they are done in a large and bold way. The average man is not directly interested in politics, and when he reads he wants the current struggles of the world to be translated into a simple story about individuals. He can take an interest in Slim and Fenner as he could not in the GPU and the Gestapo. People worship power in the form in which they are able to understand it. A twelve-year-old boy worships Jack Dempsey. An adolescent in a Glasgow slum worships Al Capone. An aspiring pupil at a business college worships Lord Nuffield. A *New Statesman* reader worships Stalin. There is a difference in intellectual maturity, but none in moral outlook. Thirty years ago the heroes of popular fiction had nothing in common with Mr. Chase's gangsters and detectives, and the idols of the English liberal intelligentsia were also comparatively sympathetic figures. Between Holmes and Fenner on the one hand, and between Abraham Lincoln and Stalin on the other, there is a similar gulf.

One ought not to infer too much from the success of Mr. Chase's books. It is possible that it is an isolated phenomenon, brought about by the mingled boredom and brutality of war. But if such books should definitely acclimatise themselves in England, instead of being merely a half-understood import from America, there would be good grounds for dismay. In choosing *Raffles* as a background for *No Orchids*, I deliberately chose a book which by the standards of its time was morally equivocal. Raffles, as I have pointed out, has no real moral code, no religion, certainly no social consciousness. All he has is a set of reflexes—the nervous system, as it were, of a gentleman. Give him a sharp tap on this reflex or that (they are called "sport," "pal," "woman," "king and country" and so forth), and you get a predictable reaction. In Mr. Chase's book there are no gentlemen, and no taboos. Emancipation is complete, Freud and Macchiavelli have reached the outer suburbs. Comparing the schoolboy atmosphere of the one book with the cruelty and corruption of the other, one is driven to feel that snobbishness, like hypocrisy, is a check upon behaviour whose value from a social point of view has been underrated.

PEASANT MOB ASKS FOR LAND

By United Press

ROME, Sept. 28.—A half-dozen Allied troops stood off a hysterical mob of several thousand Italian peasants armed with scythes, spades and a few old shotguns, several days ago when the Italians invaded the vast estate of Prince Enzo Odescaloni near Lake Bracciano, demanding that the land be turned over to unemployed factory workers.

The peasants, shouting hysterically and brandishing their primitive weapons, threatened to loot the castle as well as the outbuildings housing farm animals and machinery after stewards of the estate, Castagneta, refused to hand over the land.

The peasants returned to the village of Bracciano after the factories in Rome and other cities where they had been working closed down.

—"PM", Sept. 28, 1944, P. 5.

Oh, you nice little people
With your woolly little heads
And your rosy little cheeks,
Come sit on Uncle PM's knee
And he will write poems about you
And he will draw pictures of you
And he will write nice long letters to you
With all the big ideas spelled out.
Isn't it nice with Uncle PM?
Isn't it jolly and cozy and warm,
And isn't it dandy of him to do all that nasty hard thinking for you?
Because you're just itsy-bitsy people
And Uncle PM doesn't want you to strain
Your woolly little heads.

But kiddies, Uncle PM wants you to be careful.
Don't play with dangerous toys
Like scythes and spades
And Good Lord, don't be Italian
And for mercy's sakes
Don't demand land just because
Your little tummies are a trifle empty.
Don't do that.
Do you know what Uncle PM
Will think of you then?
He'll think you're just an old,
Grumpy,
Hysterical
MOB!

Tomorrow, Uncle PM
Will pat your woolly heads some more.
Bye bye, little people,
Wave bye bye.

ROBERT PAUL SMITH

Three salesmen were eating dinner in a Washington hotel. The bill was $30 and all reached for the check. The first fellow said his firm was in the 50% bracket, doing war work, and that the bill actually would cost him only $15. The second man said, "Let me pay it. We're in the 80% bracket, and it will cost me only $6." The third one said, "I'll pay the check. My firm is working on a cost-plus basis and we'll make $3 on the meal."

—Midwest Young Socialist, May, 1944

FROM RELIABLE SOURCES WE LEARN:

"Keep your association alive. When the next war comes—and it will come—be ready. Wars will be fought as long as men are human. And preparedness must be your policy."

—Maj. Gen. L. H. Campbell, Jr., Army chief of ordnance, speaking before a group of Seattle-Tacoma war contractors, as quoted in "The Chicago Sun" for Oct. 14, 1944.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The American Scene

PAC—A Worm's-Eye View

The local has a few thousand members. Most of them are Italian girls, about a fifth are Negroes. The great majority are new members, having come in under union-shop agreements. The manager of the union put on an energetic drive for the National Citizens' Political Action Committee, his business agents and organizers tackling the job so vigorously that about 70% of the membership—a very high percentage—contributed a dollar each.

Now the money was to be formally handed over to the secretary-treasurer of the International union at a big rally. The manager ordered the shops to close an hour early (the workers lost an hour's pay) and a hall holding 2,000 was almost filled.

The meeting began late. The first speaker was an International vice-president, a woman whose sole function is to speak at such rallies and to "represent" the women who make up a big part of the union's membership. In the 25 years since she was last a worker, she has picked up an upper-class accent. This didn't help her speech any, nor did her subject mean anything to the girls in the hall; it was a defense of "the workers' right to participate in political action" and an attack on "the reactionaries who would deny it." Most of her audience don't read the "news" in a newspaper and were unaware of the attack on Sidney Hillman. They just didn't know what she was talking about. About 6:15 the subdued murmur of private conversation became louder: there was a disturbance at the doors. A number of women, mostly colored, had started to leave, and the business agents stationed at the doors had refused to let them out. The manager scurried off the platform to confer with his lieutenants.

The speaker continued, apparently unaware of what was by now a miniature riot. "If your neighbor can't register because she has to mind the baby," she cried, "say, 'Mother, I will mind your baby—Go and register!" The audience burst into laughter. Wisecracks rippled through the room —"Who's going to mind *my* baby?" etc. It was a sudden glimpse of the gap separating speaker and audience.

When she stopped speaking at 6:30, almost half those present made a rush for the doors. The harried manager ordered his men, through the microphone, to hold the doors —he needed an audience for the all-high secretary-treasurer. Fortunately, the most determined managed to get out, and the uproar was reduced. The second speaker, a lawyer, shouted out he would speak only a few minutes. But he, too, at once proceded to demonstrate the vast distance separating the members in the audience from the speakers on the platform. He began to talk about the Red Army, and, although the predominantly Catholic audience was obviously cool to his first references, he went into a long rhapsody ending up "Vote for Roosevelt and for friendship with Soviet Russia!"

It was now almost seven, and the audience was unrestrainable. The secretary-treasurer at last made his appearance. He managed to shout a one-minute speech into the mike praising the "youthful and exuberant" members for their "fine contribution" to the PAC—and the meeting was over. Outside in the street, the unhappy manager was surrounded by angry women who were protesting being held captive: "We have to go home and make supper," etc. He tried to pacify them in a fatherly way, without much success.

PAC looks quite different from underneath than it does from the top.

EYEWITNESS

CONTRIBUTORS

WALTER J. OAKES has contributed articles and reviews to *Politics* before. He lives in Brooklyn. . . . NICCOLO TUCCI's "The Cause that Refreshes — Four Delicious Freedoms" appeared in our May issue. He lives in New York City and is working on a novel. . . . NAT GLAZER at the time of the Philadelphia strike was taking graduate work in anthropology at the U. of Pennsylvania. . . . FREDERICK HOFFMAN is a chemistry student in Philadelphia. . . . LOUIS CLAIR writes for *The Call* and other leftwing papers. His "European Newsreel" will be a regular feature of *Politics* from now on. . . . GEORGE ORWELL is a novelist, an editor of the *Tribune* (London), and the London correspondent of *Partisan Review*. He has written on other phases of popular culture, notably boys' books and comic postcards (see *Horizon*, passim). . . . ROBERT PAUL SMITH's first novel was *So It Doesn't Whistle;* his second, *The Journey;* he is at work on a third.

8 BOOKLETS BY BERTRAND RUSSELL

Bertrand Russell, the distinguished philosopher, mathematician, logician and Freethinker, recently said that he enjoyed writing booklets for E. Haldeman-Julius because he is given the fullest freedom of expression. In fact, it is only in essays written for Haldeman-Julius that Dr. Russell can give circulation to the mind-liberating thoughts he feels should be made known to the average person. Most standard publishers are afraid to issue works that are frowned on by the orthodox and conventional. Such a restriction is never encountered in the editorial department of the H-J Publications. In the booklets listed below Dr. Russell offers a feast of reason, information, logic, wit and rollicking humor. We present:

THE VALUE OF FREE THOUUGHT. How to Become a Truth-Seeker and Break the Chains of Mental Slavery..25c
AN OUTLINE OF INTELLECTUAL RUBBISH. A Hilarious Catalogue of Organized and Individual Stupidity.....25c
HOW TO READ AND UNDERSTAND HISTORY. The Past as the Key to the Future 25c
HOW TO BECOME A PHILOSOPHER, A LOGICIAN, A MATHEMATICIAN 30c
WHAT CAN A FREEMAN WORSHIP?.....25c
WHY I AM NOT A CHRISTIAN.....25c
HAS RELIGION MADE USEFUL CONTRIBUTIONS TO CIVILIZATION? 25c
A LIBERAL VIEW OF DIVORCE.....25c

We offer all eight booklets by Bertrand Russell for only $1.45, prepaid. Ask for BERTRAND RUSSELL'S EIGHT BOOKLETS. *Address:*

E. HALDEMAN-JULIUS, Box R-86 Girard, Kansas

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Intelligence Office

RANDOLPH AND "NEGROISM"

I was very interested in Mr. Kerr's article in the August issue, but felt that he did not succeed in making the label of Negroism stick to A. Philip Randolph. Among my reactions:

1) Mr. Randolph's emphasis on the primary role of the mass of colored people in winning their own liberation is sound social science. Theirs is the only mass power that is likely to be applied to the issue. Whatever outside help may be secured, the liberation of any oppressed group (i.e., wage earners) will come from the determination of its own ranks.

2) Agreed that the phrases about "charity and philanthropy from the left" are a little harsh, isn't it true that all "left" (oriented toward the overthrow of the profit system) groups have tended, in a sense, to exploit the grievances of the Negro community? While there is sincere ideological agreement in the fight against segregation and discrimination, the real aim and motivation of such groups has been the advancement of their program and symbols, of which color equality is only a part.

3) The most frequent argument which I remember being advanced during the convention discussion on the exclusion of whites was that the mass of colored citizens, which MOW wished to mold into a powerful instrument of struggle, would not fully trust white leadership. . . . In this loosely organized gathering, only one or two spoke in terms of black chauvinism during the several sessions which I attended.

I am not in as intimate touch with the colored community as Mr. Kerr; that may be the basis of my need for further evidence—I lack the detailed data of personal experience with which the issue might more readily be judged. It would be helpful, then, if Mr. Kerr would extend his remarks.

NEW YORK CITY JIM DINSMOOR

Sir:

Having shared it myself, I can understand Mr. Dinsmoor's reluctance to have A. Phillip Randolph included in a discussion on Negroism. But the truth is, neither Mr. Dinsmoor, nor any one else for that matter, can give one honest reason why he should be left out of such a subject.

All Negro leaders, and those whites who are interested, agree that the colored people themselves must be the main supporting force in the struggle against segregation and discrimination. I believe that this should be so and that it is so. But by what strange twist of logic does Mr. Randolph conclude that whites wanting to join the Negro in this struggle should be excluded and their offers spurned as charity and philanthropy from the left? This is the difference between seeing the so-called Negro Question as a problem for Negroes only, which is Negroism, and the point of view which considers it a problem for all the people, which is inter-racialism.

The philosophical basis for Negroism is distrust for white people, every mother's one of them. More than that, it is a belief that none of them, not more than a baker's dozen, care enough about the Negro to lift a hand. Can Mr. Dinsmoor deny that the organizational policies of the M.O.W. tend to increase this sentiment among Negroes and to repel those whites who would work with us?

Mr. Randolph's continued activity in interracial committees and trade union work only makes his position more vulnerable. How long can he continue to preach "Negroes Only" to Negro organizations and unity to white and mixed audiences. At least the Garveyites are clear about this.

It has been suggested that in view of Mr. Randolph's background, perhaps he is not serious about this new philosophy of his. It may be just a trick to put something bigger over, or even just talk. This seems to me to do less justice to Mr. Randolph and to be nothing but fantasy. It presents him in the role of either a slick politician or a childish fool playing with a stick of dynamite. If excluding people from an organization on the sole basis of race and teaching Negroes not to accept contributions from any white person is 'just talk', it is mighty dangerous talk.

BROOKLYN, N. Y. WILFRED H. KERR

5 KEYS TO EUROPE

Sir:

There are five basic factors whose relations to each other form the underlying fabric that confronts anybody concerned with European affairs. It does not matter what the three big powers may ultimately decide. So long as only one of the factors is allowed to disturb the whole, Europe will never have a peaceful development.

Here they are:

(1) Europe (without Russia) cannot exist without a favorable export-import balance. Its masses cannot be fed and sheltered by the products of its soil. It has to import 2/3 of its wheat, meat and cotton.

(2) Under the revolutionary impact of fascism, national economic systems became continental. What capitalists (steel, chemicals) had accomplished on a smaller scale, state-controlled capitalism planned on a continental scale.

(3) All European nations followed and follow an extreme nationalistic course. Their imperialisms notwithstanding, their thinking does not overpass their borders, or the borders of their colonies. They do not think in European terms. The smaller and narrower their basis of existence, the more violent is their nationalism. Any redrawing of border lines will merely create a shift in irridentas and will conflict with a continental economy that has finally outgrown national borders.

(4) The mood of the lower middleclass and the workingmen, for all its nationalism, is definitely anti-capitalist. All radical, socialist, communist or fascist movements have this in common as their main appeal. Social security, the European masses have learned, can be given only by the state, and since the capitalists opposed the extension of the state power into this field, the state had to replace the entrepreneur as the common man's horn of, if not plenty, at least subsistence. Social theories are pretty much mysteries to the fellow on the receiving end. But he has, empirically, learned to trust the state more than the entrepreneur. To him, the state is not a Jeffersonian necessary-evil, but a father.

(5) The Roman Catholic Church is the richest single land and property-owning "corporation" in Europe. Its policies were and are always in defense of its metaphysical and physical property. There is no compromise possible with the Church when its substance is threatened.

Whatever may happen in Europe during the next decades, these five factors will raise the very devil with any policy which dares overlook them, or even one of them. The solution is not to be found in power politics or among statesmen.

NEW YORK CITY ROBERT BEK-GRAN

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Dear Sir, You Cur" Department

Sir:

To call Norman Thomas a "pro-war liberal" is a vicious lie. If you took the trouble to read most of Thomas' speeches, you'd realize that he is an honest socialist who isn't quite sure about his stand on the war, but limits his references to it to political opposition to specific events. . . .

Aside from that, Thomas is one of, if not *the* finest men in the country. Thomas does socialism in this country more good than a hundred Macdonalds. Outside of New York, who's Left is predominantly totalitarian, he is the only thing which keeps socialism alive before the American people. You don't have to have any campaign, so you can toss the super-revolutionary terminology about. If we are to reach the American people, we'll have to use a terminology which doesn't sound as strange as yours, and that's what Thomas does—you mistake this for lack of purity.

The least you could have done was to have published the article after the election.

May I suggest that you go fornicate behind some volumes of Lenin instead of spending your time hindering the Socialist movement.

IRWIN SUALL
CHICAGO, ILL. Y. P. S. L. ORGANIZER

—And may I suggest that Organizer Suall's mother wash his mouth out with soap?—Ed.

Sir:

Dwight Macdonald's strange flirtation with the pacifists in POLITICS and his insistent and petty vendetta against the Trotskyists has given rise in me to some thoughts on POLITICS. . . .

Judging from the tone of the magazine, it would have been much better to call it AGAINST POLITICS. The magazine is Macdonald's personal organ; he puts down in the editorial comment the thoughts that occur to him during the month. These are not political thoughts. They are more in the nature of the things an intelligent and well-informed socialist sympathizer (but a little weary of it all) might say to his friends in day-to-day conversation. They are hardly worth putting in print in a publication which calls itself Marxist and political.

The point is that there is an air of only half-conviction about POLITICS, an air of defeatism and languor. Macdonald seems neither profound nor even serious. A great deal of his monthly editorial comment is trivial or platitudinous or both. . . . It is obvious the editor is not up to his job.

Politics is a tough and serious business. It requires a joining together of diverse personalities united in a common program and a common belief. It requires working together, and that, in turn, requires discipline, the elimination of vacillating refinements of thought, over-scrupulousness, hesitations, faint-heartedness. Above all, a certain crudity of effort is required—the crudity of seriousness.

These are the things POLITICS lacks. In fact, the running of a magazine called POLITICS and dedicated to politics by one man, all by himself, is, in a sense, highly ludicrous.

But to get back to my specific complaint about Macdonald and the pacifists. . . . Only those men who have declined military service and gone to prison (1) because they felt the war was an unjust one in that it was imperialist, or (2) because they oppose the use of violence for any reason, can be considered serious pacifists in a political sense. . . . I believe these men are few. . . . The largest group of CO's are the ones who went to government camps as an alternative to military service. In the sense in which Macdonald found praise for pacifism in that it is a direct opposing and challenging of the State's power to make war, these men are not pacifists at all. They did not oppose the State; they made a deal with it. . . . I have talked with a number of men who went to CPS camps. They told me that in order to get the CO classification, they had to wrap their opposition to war in some kind of religious blathering. It follows that the men who went to camp were not opposers of the State, but recipients of special privileges from the State. As such, the moral force of their pseudo-conscientious objection must be rated as nothing.

To praise the pacifists, with whom he disagrees, Macdonald must slander the Trotskyists in a particularly vile way. . . . He points out how politically correct their activities are, but because they do not blow up banks or assault bourgeois politicians, there is something morally dessicated about them. It was too much for him. He left them presumably before the dry rot had corrupted him entirely, and retired into a private political world of his own where, having money, he was able to edit a private political magazine, expressing his private views, uncontaminated by corrupt Trotskyism which does not unite the word with the deed.

The slandered Trotskyists, a number of whom are now in Federal prisons for their policy of conformance which Macdonald found so dessicating, are persons who have decisively rejected the bourgeois world. They belong to a disciplined political group which has worked out what it believes to be a correct program and they work, most of them, in their free time to spread this program. Being human, and not having unearned income, they have to eat and work in order to eat. To work, they must "conform" to the bourgeois world.

NEW YORK CITY OWEN CAMPBELL

—I regret that I am only one person, and hence incapable of serious political comment. Being a single individual has been a weakness of mine since birth and I doubt if anything can be done about it at this late date. But this, of course, does not excuse POLITICS *for being so miserably unlike, say, "The Militant", which has indeed most successfully eliminated "vacillating refinements of thoughts" and "over-scrupulousness". It has also achieved a high degree of crudity, as, for that matter, has Comrade Campbell himself.—ED.*

The Unalienated Intellectual

Sir:

In George P. Elliott's analysis of the POLITICS writers, among whom I am mentioned, I notice the words "disinherited", "rejected", and of course "neurotic". There was a quite similar line of argument in a recent article by Koestler on "The Intelligentsia" in *Partisan Review*. This makes me think, what an astounding shift in evaluation has taken place in the last hundred years!

When Marx, for instance, speaks of the "alienation" of a social class, he is referring precisely to the bourgeoisie, who, by more and more bending their desires and virtues to the accumulation of exchange-value rather than use-values, have gradually *alienated* themselves from natural, social, and cultural goods. Secondarily it is the masses who are alienated, *not* because they are exploited or starved, or subjected (as Elliott says of the writers) to "impermanence, vulgarity, sexual repression, hypocrisy, and a subtle cruelty,"—but *in so far* as they adopt the bourgeois values as their own, instead of insisting on friendship, political indignation and initiation, sexual freedom, and honest letters. Now lo! a hundred years have passed. With the increase in the size of enterprises and the colossal growth of mass-distribution thru advertising, the bourgeois

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

values have intensified and have, according to the Marxist analysis, quite taken leave of their natural wits. Suddenly it is the critics who insist on human meaning in production and consumption who are called alienated! Who's crazy now? If our neighbors are having bad dreams and we are lucky enough not to share them, are we therefore alienated, disinherited, rejected?

Or even *rejecting* (another of Elliott's words). For the proper attitude to bad dreams is neither to reject them nor even to agitate against them, but to analyze them and lay bare the latent causes, as Mrs. Schuyler rightly said in your last issue. This, I take it, POLITICS is trying to do. It is also good for the patient to hear of the ideals and social inventions of relatively sane persons, so he wants to hasten his cure. Of this POLITICS could have more.

This brings me to Elliott's remarks on our future culture. He castigates the editor for not believing that our present Popular Culture will evolve into a Human Culture, and opines that he is "premissing an altogether new and wonderful Democratic Society from which will spring the Masses complete in aesthetic understanding". Is there not another alternative? Namely, that a relatively few honest fellows, undebauched by the big money (tho it would be nice if one could get it without taking it to heart), are quite simply thinking up some good things which should appeal more to the simpler populace than to the emulative classes? I think this is Macdonald's meaning.

I am acquainted with a fair number of POLITICS writers, and I can assure your correspondent that they are not a harried lot, alternately hating and pitying; but that on the contrary, for amiability of intercourse and for seeing the humorous side, they surpass those employed, say, in the government agencies here. (I have never been to California, so this may be an irrelevant comparison.) Some of them even *are*, not "would have been", artists; and *all* the time, not "from time to time".

Tho I am only seven years older, I am two generations older than George, for I emerged from College during the Depression, but he even after the Sit-Down Strikes, in the period of the post-New Deal. Therefore let me talk to him like a grandfather. When he pathetically says in his autobiography that he has "two ambitions: to write poetry and to make a living. The latter seems to be winning out recently;"—might one not ask, What kind of *living* is it that a poet would make which would be precluding his writing poetry? Is one to call this a living? Which elements of this *standard* of living (here is the *real* point!) give as much life as the possibility of art? I have long been in exactly the same family situation as George, and I know whereof I speak.

CLOSTER, N. J. PAUL GOODMAN

"Thomas for President?"

Dear Dwight,

Apparently, leaving the Trotskyites did not cure you of the malady of sectarian purist analysis. Your opposition to the Socialist presidential campaign shows a complete lack of understanding of the nature of the third-party and socialist politics.

You attack Thomas and the Socialist Party for not having a complete revolutionary socialist position. Unfortunately, if the Socialist Party had such a program, it would appeal to about the same number of people as the two Trotskyist parties. The primary job of American radicals is the creation of a mass socialistic party along the lines of the Canadian CCF. The Socialist Party today represents the least common denominator of those who are ready for such a party. Its basic program is political action independent of the two capitalist parties by labor and the left, a non-imperialist peace, support of civil liberties and labor's rights, and socialism as the only ultimate solution. There are today hundreds of thousands, if not millions who agree with such a program. The S.P. is trying to mobilize them. It is ready to unite with every group such as those who joined with the Michigan Socialists to form MCF, to build a new party. Until such a party exists, the S. P. small as it is, tries to educate as many as it can to such a program.

Now how would you have such education conducted? Unfortunately, the average American does not have the political background of the reader of POLITICS or the members and habitual hangerons of the Trotskyists. To begin to interest him in Socialism, you have to talk in elementary language (which does not mean "Shop Talks in Socialism" explaining surplus value in simple English). If you would go out as some of us in the S.P. and Y.P.S.L. have done, and attempt to speak to non-radical Americans, you would find yourself saying, "Why doesn't Roosevelt do this?", "Why is he doing that?", "Isn't the democratic way this way, etc?" One can not talk in abstractions about the fact that it is impossible for any political official to act progressively within the framework of a capitalist structure of power.

The fact is, comrade Macdonald, any party which is contending for mass support cannot do other than campaign in a reformist fashion. A revolutionary party is only practical when the workers of a country are class conscious and believe in socialism as a way out. Then an educated, disciplined, revolutionary group, can play a role in using crisis situations to bring about a socialist government. The ILP in England, the PSOP in France, the POUM in Spain, can talk revolutionary socialism to the masses of the people, because the problem in those countries is not making socialists but obtaining power.

The place today for all American leftists who believe that the first step to radicalize the American people is through a mass reformist socialistic party is in the Socialist Party. It is the only organized group attempting to build such a party. (One can not include the Trotskyites in the movement for such a third party as the Cannonites oppose any socialist demands in a third party and Shactman reveals profound irresponsibility when he attacks the first attempt to build a third party, the Michigan Commonwealth Federation, for its line on the war. Both Trotskyists groups would also submit a third party to control by the Unions which would doom both its electoral appeal and its revolutionary potential. Perhaps the realism of the entire Trotskyist movement is revealed by the action of the Canadian Trotskyites, who split from CCF before it started its rapid growth with the usual revolutionary manifesto saying CCF was doomed, etc.)

I really think it would be a shame if POLITICS which could be so helpful in educating the revolutionary left of American socialism should become just another critical little mag satisfying the ego of its editor, but influencing no one. Come on Dwight, give POLITICS some real politics.

Fraternally and still for the building
of a revolution party,

YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIALIST LEAGUE, NEW YORK CITY MARTY LEWIS

Dear Marty,

You misunderstand, to some extent, my criticism of Thomas. It is not that he doesn't use "revolutionary" language. As you know, when I was in the Trotskyist movement, I objected strongly to that kind of thing; and I

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

should certainly choose Thomas's manner to, let's say, James P. Cannon's, as a means of communicating with any considerable numbers of Americans. My objection is, rather, to the content *of Thomas's political analysis, which I tried to show is bourgeois-liberal rather than socialist. The contrast, for example, of his "line" on the war with that of Debs. (What do you think about that yourself, by the way? And about Thomas himself? You neglected to say.)*

When you say that only a reformist (which, in my political vocabulary anyway, means "liberal" and not "socialist") political line today can attract any large mass of American voters, I agree. As I've stated several times, the mood of the American workingclass is extremely conservative at present. But in making this point, you seem to be granting my main point, which is that Thomas is not a socialist leader but rather a left-liberal spokesman. Now while I would not object to supporting a reformist leader under certain circumstances (which I indicated in my article) I see no gain, and much confusion, from doing it at the present time. That is really the issue, not any alleged "purism" on my part. (Cannon and Shachtman would certainly smile at the idea of my being a "revolutionary purist.") You fail to argue this point, however, and rest your case simply on the indisputable fact that Thomas's reformist line will today get a wider hearing than a socialist appeal would. But Roosevelt's line gets an even wider hearing, so popular appeal obviously cannot be the sole determinant of one's policy.

There is an implication in your letter that, because I don't support the Socialist Party in this election, I am opposed to or indifferent to its program and activities in general. This is not the case, any more than I am indifferent to efforts of the liberal weeklies to further certain worthy causes. But to applaud Bruce Bliven or Freda Kirchwey when they attack Boss Hague or argue against Vansittartism is not necessarily to be willing to endorse them if they run for president. The Socialist Party fights for many excellent causes—many more, of course, than the liberal weeklies—and one's general political evaluation of the S.P. does not at all mean that one does not do what he can to help in these matters.

Finally, let me make a small point on method in political thinking. I've observed that whenever I criticise a leftwing party, those who belong to or support that group at once retort that POLITICS *is not being "political" but is merely—in your words—"satisfying the ego of its editor." (Note the almost exact coincidence of your formulations with those of Mr. Campbell, whose letter appears elsewhere in this department.) In other words, an individual observer is dealing with politics when he supports the party one adheres to, but ceases to do so and becomes merely a showoff when he attacks one's own party. This is not a rational attitude.*

It is also a misconception of the nature of the magazine. POLITICS *is not an adjunct of the S.P., the S.W.P., the W.P., or any other existing party. Its whole rationale, at present anyway, is opposed to any such ties: it exists to analyze and comment on political programs and actions in an atmosphere of completely free inquiry, without any avowed or secret commitments to any group. The sign over our shop is: "No political axes ground here." As for laying the foundation of some future leftwing anticapitalist movement in this country, I think it can at present be done—to the modest extent that a magazine can do it—better by unsparing criticism of existing leftwing parties (all of which, in one way or another, seem to me to be inadequate to the needs of the times) than by making a "lesser evil" choice between them.*

Fraternally,

DWIGHT MACDONALD

politics — a Reasonably Ideal Xmas Gift

Gives roots to the radical
Enlightens the benighted
Irritates the irritable
Suggests things to the suggestible
Does something for practically every one

What Is Home without a Sub to politics?

Special Christmas Rate

Two or more full-year subscriptions at $2 each (instead of $2.50, the regular rate). For service men and C.O.'s: $1.75 a year. You may include your own renewal, from whenever it expires.

Every Man His Own Santa Claus.

politics, 45 Astor Place, New York 3, N. Y.

Enclosed is $..... Please enter the following gift subs, to begin with the.....issue. (Note: all back issues are still available.) Indicate if one of them is your renewal.

NAME .....
ADDRESS .....
CITY..... UNIT.... STATE.....

NAME .....
ADDRESS .....
CITY..... UNIT.... STATE.....

NAME .....
ADDRESS .....
CITY..... UNIT.... STATE.....

NAME .....
ADDRESS .....
CITY..... UNIT.... STATE.....

☐ Check here if you want us to send gift cards.

My name and address is: .....

.....

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED